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III

Fielding's

TOM JONES

By

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MASTER GUIDE
TO
HENRY FIELDING
AND HIS
TOM JONES

Price Rs. 8.00

FALCON PRINTING
PRESS LAHORE

THE ENGLISH NOVEL IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The novel as we understand it today begins from the 18th century in England and it may fairly be contended that it was with Richardson that prose fiction passed definitely into its modern form.

In the earlier ages also, a certain amount of prose fiction had been produced, notwithstanding the fact that imaginative energy had then found its chief outlet in drama. Most of this fiction had been purely romantic as with Sidney (*Arcadia*). Lodge (*Rosalynde*) and Greene (*Pandosto*) ; or didactic as with More, Lyly (*Euphues*) and Bacon ; but a slight tendency to realism had been shown in the picaresque work of Nash (*The Unfortunate Traveller*). All of these lack shape and proportion. Action is held by long, moralizing discourses. There is little or no skill shown in the management and distribution of crises in the story. Characterization is crude, and of the interplay of character and situation there is no indication. Even more important is the absence of any critical interpretation of manners and behaviour by the writer. There is, in fact, nothing to reveal his attitude to the events he narrates. The novel proper on the other hand, is touched by the author's outlook and personality and the aesthetic pleasure which it gives comes not only from its content but also from the illumination it affords of the writer's mind.

A little later, the longwinded Heroic Romance—a strange compound of sham chivalry, sham pastoralism, pseudo-history, and the extravagant gallantry of a sophisticated society—was imported from France, where for the moment it was immensely popular, and along with many other French fashions, enjoyed a temporary vogue on English soil. Then in reaction against the terrible prolixity and absolute unreality of this type, Aphra Behn (1640-89), and several other women writers, began to cultivate a form of story which was marked by brevity and

concentration of treatment, and which, while still radically conventional in matter and method. showed by contrast a certain desire to get back to truth and nature.

The Coverly Papers of Addison and Steele which were written in the period 1709—12, also contributed to the development of prose fiction. Though in *The Coverly Papers* we cannot look for that sustained interest which is essential to a novel, this large development in characterization must still be regarded as a stage in the evolution of the genuine novel. The character of one man, Sir Roger de Coverley who represents the middle class has been depicted in a lovely and interesting manner. The style also is charming, racy and easy. Thus it is **scarcely** too much to say that in *The Coverly Papers*, we have the modern novel in germ.

John Bunyan

"For any advance in the art of fiction-writing we have to move forward the best part of a century, to Bunyan's *'Pilgrim's Progress'* which appeared in 1678 ; followed two years later by *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*. Bunyan himself did not regard his work as fiction, but rather as a record of his own spiritual experiences. Although he wrote in the form of allegory, every detail of character and incident is realized with vivid intensity, and the dialogue is natural. With him, 'personifications', as Macaulay said, 'became men. A dialogue between two qualities, in his dream, has more dramatic effect than a dialogue between two human beings in most plays.' Further the books tell us as much about Bunyan himself as about anyone of his creations. Though, he thus made a considerable advance towards the fully-developed novel, it would be wrong to class Bunyan as a novelist. His purpose in writing, and his attitude to story and to the reader were didactic and arose from his religious outlook ; any advances he made in the art of fiction were inadvertent."

Daniel Defoe

The publication of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Colonel Jack* and *Moll Flanders* (1722), and numerous other romances of the type which purports to describe actual events, marks another stage in the development of novel. If we accept for a moment the limited definition of a novel as a story of

considerable length which, though not historically true, might very well be so, since it arises out of normal experience and is based on actual manners and credible people, Defoe may properly be laid to have created it as a literary form. He had the trick of verisimilitude to perfection. His *Journal of the Plague Year*, a narrative of events which happened when he was a child of four years, carries all the conviction of a record of authentic experience, and is an admirable illustration of the saying : Truth hath no greater enemy than verisimilitude.

Yet to adopt this quality of truth-seeming as a criterion of literary fiction would be to isolate one aspect, if a very prominent one, of the novel, and so to exaggerate its importance. Defoe's romances lacked a more important quality. They were not integrated. Events set in an unbroken line succeed one another in time, and there is no attempt to indicate a relation between cause and effect, or to analyse the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Later novelists freed themselves from chronology in order to supply their own comment and interpretation, and thereby to suggest the "frame of reference" within which the novel is constructed.

Beginning of the Novel—Samuel Richardson

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) wrote the first English novel in which human relationships play an important part, and in which there is a degree of emotional unity. This development came about almost accidentally. Richardson has written a book called *The Moral Letter Writer*, which was intended to be instructional. He then transformed the material into a series of letters passing to and fro among imaginary characters, in which a sentimental love story is developed.

The result was *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), the first love-novel in English and perhaps in European literature of incident there is little, but analysis of character and of motive is carried to extravagant lengths and executed with meticulous refinement. Every circumstance of the relationship between Pamela, the demur serving maid, and the master of the house is set down and rehearsed over and over again, in interminable letters written by herself, her parents and her friends, until finally she is triumphantly justified in her resistance to importunity

by winning her persuer in wedlock, and finding herself mistress of a fine establishment.

Richardson soon realized that he was engaged in a "new species of writing". It was new in that it combined in a single work of literary art a record of the unfolding of external events, with a description of the inner states of thought and feeling which accompanied these events, and gave them their significance. The instantaneous appeal of *Pamela* led to the writing of *Clarissa Harlowe* (1748), Richardson's masterpiece in realistic fiction, and to *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) in which the level is not sustained. But the novel of sentiment or sensibility was now fairly launched on its way and within a very short time there were numerous imitators.

The example of Richardson was enough to establish the vogue of the epistolary novel for a time but its inherent limitations and absurdities before long produced a reaction in favour of a less artificial method.

Henry Fielding

Henry Fielding, a stipendiary magistrate of Westminster, entered the field of novel writing with *Joseph Andrews* (1742), which began as a parody of *Pamela* but then developed on original lines. The narrow domesticities of Richardson's world are replaced by a scene thronged with characters who enjoy their open-air life without inhibitions. The humour is sometimes by our standard coarse, but it springs from the vigour of animal spirits. Parson Adams is one of the great comic figures of literature and the first of such to be presented in a novel.

In *Tom Jones* (1749), Fielding reveals his skill as a novelist even more fully, and this is considered by some to be the greatest literary work of the century. The canvas on which he depicts the pulsating life of the English countryside is of epic dimensions. Thackeray called *Tom Jones*, "the greatest comic epic" and Byron called Fielding, "our prose Homer". As a picture of manners, the novel is unsurpassed, and takes its place beside Hogarth's drawings as an eighteenth century social document. But the importance of *Tom Jones* is not in its content alone; it is remarkable also for its structure and for the skill with which the principal plot and the lesser plots are managed. Fielding uses the device of the omniscient narrator, but he succeeds

in making the pattern of events objective, so that they move from stage to stage by virtue of an inner necessity. Character is revealed indirectly through action, and both take on thereby a deeper meaning. *Tom Jones* is thus an essentially realistic novel, and its consistency is marred only by the introduction of moral invocations, which were a characteristic of the literature of the period.

Tobias Smollett

The possibilities of the novel were still further extended in the work of Tobias Smollett (1721-71), who was first a ship's, then a London surgeon. He made a worthy third in this trinity of early novelists. *Roderick Random* appeared in 1748, and *Peregrine Pickle* in 1751, and near the end of his life he wrote *Humphrey Clinker.* The autobiographical element gives to his novels a basis of realism, but Smollett was attracted by eccentricity rather than by normal humanity. Often this taste for the grotesque led him into coarse vulgarity. His humour was of the practical joke variety and showed little regard for the susceptibilities of the squeamish. The merit of Smollett was in bringing to the novel of adventure the special knowledge he had gained from his own experiences. It is no accident that many of his most successful creations, such as Trunion and Tom Bowling are sailors.

Laurence Sterne

Laurence Sterne (1713-68) is usually classed as a novelist, though in fact his *Tristram Shandy* is so formless that it does not lend itself to easy classification. There is no coherent narrative, for the story such as it is, is continually interrupted while the author indulges his fondness for digressions. In these Sterne uses material borrowed from out of the way literary sources, whose only relevance is that they feed his appetite for the whimsical and sentimental. The Shandean attitude to life involves an excess of sentiment, tearful or boisterous as the case may be. Some situations are met with inconsequent foolery, some with recondite allusions; others with ribald innuendo and even with complete absence of mind. There is, in short, a total surrender to the moods of a capricious sensibility.

Tristram Shandy appeared in instalments over a period of

years (1759-67), and readers in England and France devoured them eagerly on publication. The mannerisms of the writing, which were a complete denial of the values of the Augustan school, seemed to suit the taste of his age. "The man of sensibility" had displaced the "man of reason" as the most approved type. But for later readers, the value of Sterne lies in his consummate literary art. When we have discounted the crude buffooneries, the blank spaces, the asterisks, the chaptertitles without chapters, the nonsense jingles and the like, there remains a style of considerable distinction, and a power of using the language to provide exquisite pleasure.

The foregoing four novelists—Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne—represent four different tendencies in the novel of the period. Richardson and Fielding were realists, but Richardson was a sentimentalist and Fielding a humorist. Smollett and Sterne, however, were not realists in the same way in which Richardson and Fielding were. Like Fielding, Smollett was a humorist, but was interested in caricature. Sterne, like Richardson, was a sentimentalist, but was interested in fantasy. Thus we have the following four different tendencies in the novel of that period : (1) Richardson represented sentimentalism and realism. (2) Fielding represented humour and realism. (3) Smollett represented humour and caricature. (4) And Sterne represented sentimentalism and fantasy. The reason why there was so much difference among the four types of novel is that the novel was a completely new form at that time. It should also be noted that during the period 1719-42,—during less than a quarter of a century—all the three styles—autobiographical, epistolary and narrative—in which all later novels have been written, had come into existence.

Dr. Johnson

Dr. Johnson's ***Rasselas*** (1759) was a miserable failure as a novel. Johnson used his art to provide entertainment to a sermon. But ***Rasselas*** is not so much a novel as a grave satire on human life. There is hardly any character to portray except Inlac who may partly be Johnson himself, nor does it have any story to tell.

Oliver Goldsmith

Goldsmith's ***The Vicar of Wakefield*** was published in 1766.

The Vicar, his family and their associates are delightful pieces of portraiture, but the plot is slow and poorly motived. In the course of their experiences there are some rather severe strictures on English customs, particularly as to law-courts and prisons. There is much sentimental tenderness, and an almost idyllic treatment of humble village life which set a new standard for such things throughout Europe.

The novel of the latter half of the eighteenth century developed on three principal lines—the Gothic Novel, the Novel with a Message or Doctrinaire Novel and the Novel of Manners.

The Gothic Novel

First, there is the novel of Terror and Mystery, sometimes described as the Gothic Romance. The writers belonging to this category found in medieval manners, legends and scenes a prolific source of interest and inspiration. This new attitude was a reaction against the rationalism and materialism of Hanoverian England. The characteristics of the Gothic Novel are: sensation of the most extravagant kind; return to Romantic Middle Ages; appeal to imagination; use of the mysterious and the supernatural.

The first important product of this cult of medievalism was Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Walpole was an important figure in the literary and artistic life of the mid-Georgian period, and he was largely responsible for the craze for antiquarianism which arose at that time. The content of *The Castle of Otranto*, the scene of which is laid in the Italy of the twelfth century, is at the opposite extreme from the drawing-room and kitchen intimacies of *Pamela*. It was an attempt to exploit the possibilities of Gothic mystery and romance as a basis for fiction. Walpole's use of supernatural was often clumsy and obvious, but he set a fashion which was widely copied both in England and on the continent.

Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* was a direct imitation of Walpole, but better known are the books of Mrs. Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis, who were typical exponents of the novel of Mystery and Terror. *The Monk* by Lewis is an extreme example, with black magic, murder and lust as its main themes. Mrs. Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1795) resembles *Ostranto* in its use of conventionally crude means of suggesting

terror : dark passages, fearsome dungeons, shadowy effects, mysterious footsteps and so forth ; but because of her careful building up a romantically emotive background, she stands high among writers of "thrillers". A very remarkable work in this genre was Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*, at the suggestion of Byron and her husband, to beguile the time during a wet season in Switzerland. Frankenstein, a student of science, fashioned a monster by animating dead bones, but was then terrorized and murdered by the unnatural creature to which he had given life.

In the productions of these writers there is little to interest us much today. But we must note the historical significance of their return to the romantic Middle Ages, and of their appeal to the imagination by the free use of the mysterious and the supernatural ; and we must remember that they did much to stimulate and fertilise the genius of Scott.

The Novel with a Message or The Doctrinaire Novel

The second line of development was the didactic novel, or novel with a message. It was not to be expected that an instrument so handy, and so admirably suited to the purpose of proselytizing, should have been neglected by those who had political or other doctrines to inculcate. The novel found its way into large numbers of domestic circles, and the practice of reading aloud in family group ensured that whatever influence it had should be widespread. Rousseau had set out his views on education in two novels : *La Nouvelle Heloise*, and *Emile*, and William Godwin, Shelley's father-in-law, who was strongly influenced by French Revolutionary views wrote *Caleb Williams or Things as They Are* to give currency to the opinions expressed in his philosophical treatise, *Political Justice*. Other writers who followed Godwin with novels of ideas were Robert Bage, the Quaker freethinker (*Man as He Is* and *Hermsprong or Man as He Is Not*), Mrs. Inchbald (*A Simple Story*), Hannah More (*Calebs in Search of a Wife*), and Thomas Holcroft (*Anna St. Ives*). The propagandist novel tends by its very nature to be ephemeral. The problems it discusses cease after a time to agitate people either because they are solved or because more compelling ones arise. The books mentioned in this paragraph are seldom read, but nevertheless they have historical importance because of the

persistence of the novel with a message through the nineteenth century. In the latter age Charles Dickens praised social reform in his novels, and Disraeli used fiction to propagate his political views. There were also such novelist, reformers and moralists as Charles Kingsley, F. D. Maurice and George Eliot.

The Novel of Manners

We have now to consider the third line of development, the novel of manners, lightly touched with a vein of satiric humour. The prototype is Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, which depicts the country life of England as seen from the point of view of rectory. Fanny Burney, whose diary is one of our precious literary legacies, wrote several novels, including *Evelina*, in which the town is regarded from the standpoint of the country. The heroine, a country girl, tells in a series of letters her impressions of London and how she adapts herself to its life. It is a comparatively small jump from Fanny Burney to Jane Austen, in whose hands the domestic novel reaches perfection.

A note should also be added on the historical significance of the novel. Hudson has dealt with the problem in his *Outline History of English Literature*. "The following points should be carefully considered in this connection. In the first place, the popularity of the novel, like that of the periodical essay which immediately preceded it, coincided with and very largely depended upon, the growth of a miscellaneous reading public, and of a public in which women were becoming increasingly numerous and influential. Secondly, as practically, a new form of literary art, the novel was a sign that literature was beginning to outgrow the cramping limitations of classicism and to abandon the doctrine that modern genius was bound to go in the leading-strings of tradition. In the epic and the drama it was impossible as yet that men should reject altogether the authority of antiquity. In the novel that authority could be ignored. There was indeed, as notably in Fielding's case, some discussion of technical questions from the classicist standpoint and an occasional parade of classical learning. But in general, the novel offered a fresh field, in which modern writers were able to work independently. Thirdly, the rise of the novel was one result of the democratic movement in the 18th century England. The romance, like tragedy had been

almost consistently aristrocratic in the range of its interests and characters ; and even Defoe, while he repudiated romantic conventions in this as in all other respects, still held aloof from the ordinary social world merely substituting adventurers and criminals for princes and Arcadian shepherds. The comprehensiveness of the novel, its free treatment of the characters and doings of all sorts and conditions of men, and specially its sympathetic handling of middle class and low life, are unmistakeable evidences of its democratic quality. It was not by accident, therefore, that it appeared at a time when, under Sir Robert Walpole's firm rule, England was settling down after a long period of military excitement, and when with the consequent growth of commerce and industry, the prestige of the old feudal nobility was on the wane, and the middle class were increasing steadily in social and political power. As Lord Morley has said of *Pamela* 'it was the landmark of a great social, no less than a great literary transition, when all England went mad with enthusiasm over the trials, the virtues, the triumphs of a rustic lady's maid'. Finally, as the form of the novel gives a far wider scope than is allowed by the corresponding form of the drama for the treatment of motives, feelings and all the phenomena of the inner life, it tended from the first to take a peculiar place as the typical art-form of the introspective and analytical modern world."

HENRY FIELDING

I

LIFE AND WORKS OF FIELDING

Henry Fielding (1707–54), came of a good family. We know little of his early years. He began as a playwright with *Love in Severel Masques* (1728), a comedy in the Restoration manner, but soon found a real talent for burlesque. *The Author's Farce and the Pleasures of the Town* (1730) satirized the new craze for opera and pantomime ; but much more important is *Tom Thumb* (1730) enlarged as *The Tragedy of Tragedies ; or The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1731), a parody of Young's tumid tragedy *Busiris*. This deserves to rank with *The Critic* as a piece both humorous in itself and apt in its apprehension of dramatic absurdity. Good, too, is *The Convent Garden Tragedy* (1732), a burlesque of Ambrose Philip's *The Distrest Mother*. In 1732, Fielding adapted Moliere's *Le Medecin Malgre Lui* as *The Mock Doctor* and in 1733 *L' Avare* as *The Miser*. This was followed (1734) by *The Intriguing Chambermaid* and *Don Quixote in England*. Early in 1736 he took the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, formed a company of actors, and in this and the following year produced *Pasquin* and *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*. But Fielding's outspoken political criticism called into existence a Licensing Act (1737) which ended his career as a dramatist. This important matter will be mentioned again in a later page. Having dismissed his company, Fielding forsook the theatre and turned to law and journalism. In 1739 appeared the first number of *The Champion*, published thrice a week. Fielding like his great successor Dickens, was a natural crusader, and his social indignation finds an attractive expression in the *Champion* papers.

To speculate upon the part played by chance in the making of a great man is an agreeable diversion. Would Dickens have become the Dickens we know if he had not been engaged to write humorous letterspress to pictures of Cockney sportsmen ? Would Richardson have become the Richardson we know if he had not been asked to write model letters ? Would

Fielding have become the Fielding we know if Richardson's narrowly virtuous *Pamela* had not offended his broader charity ? These are engaging questions ; but the immediate fact is that Fielding already skilled in dramatic parody, was tempted to parody *Pamela*, and set to work. Whether *Shamela* was a trial effort we are not sure. If it was, Fielding was immediately drawn to something on a larger scale : and the parody like *Pamela* itself, grew beyond the author's first intention till it became his first published novel, *The History of Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams, written in Immitation of the Manner of Cervantes, Author of Don Quixote* (1742). As Pamela was tempted by her master, so her brother, Joseph Andrews is tempted by his mistress. And then as happened in *Pickwick*, the book came alive and insisted on going its own way. Lady Booby the mistress practically disappears ; Joseph slips into the second place, and the chief character in the story is the poor clergyman. Parson Adams, an immortal creation. The reference to Cervantes on the title page is a clear indication that Fielding found the easy narrative form of *Don Quixote* as natural to him as Richardson had found the descriptive and analytic epistle.

In 1743, Fielding issued three volumes of *Miscellanies*. The first contains some verses which are negligible. The second contains the long fragment in the manner of Lucian, *A Journey from this World to the Next*, one of Fielding's happiest satirical inventions. The third contains the most brilliant piece of work that he had yet achieved *The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*. Hitherto his irony had but flashed. In *Jonathan Wild* it burns with a fierce flame. Few more terrible satires on greatness have been written. Today, the book has an uncomfortable oppositeness. The 'Forty-Five' inspired him to composition of a different kind, and in *The True Patriot* and *The Jacobites Journal* (1748-9) he sought to arouse a better national feeling. The sincerity of his public spirit was proved when he became a magistrate in 1748, and endeavoured to remedy at the root the evils due to ignorance, poverty and drink. Thereafter comes *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling in* 1749 of which we shall speak later on. Fielding's last novel *Amelia* (1751), is by universal consent inferior to its predecessor, partly because the essayist, sharply separated from the novelist in Tom Jones,

intrudes upon the story. However, the book as a whole is the work of a mellower, soberer Fielding than the author of *Tom Jones*—a Fielding touched with tears.

In 1752, Fielding returned to his old love, the occasional newspaper, and issued *The Convent Garden Journal*, which contains the best of his essays. Later publications related to his professional interests, and hardly concern us; but we may note that in *A Clear State of the Case of Elizabeth Canning* (1753) he was on the wrong side in a celebrated piece of deception. His health was now entirely broken down, and in the summer of 1754 he was ordered south. On the way he wrote *A Journal of Voyage to Lisbon* (1755) which is full of his peculiar charm. He died in that city and is buried there.

II

FIELDING'S CHARACTER

In no other case, the character of the novelist was so much responsible for the works than in the case of Fielding. And therefore, we should have a knowledge of his character in order to study his novels in a better way.

"Until comparatively recently," Dudden writes, "the conception of Fielding which prevailed in the popular imagination was that of a man of brilliant geniuses, endowed with what is called 'a good heart' and many amiable qualities, but dissipated and irresponsible, guilty of regrettable follies, and not wholly unsustained even by graver vices. This conception originated in Fielding's lifetime, and being uncorrected by his biographers, became traditional. Even now notwithstanding a more careful and critical scrutiny of the evidence, it has not been entirely discarded." The following are the qualities of his character :

First, he was a gentleman—a man of good birth and education, and he never forgot this fact or ceased to be proud of it. It rendered him superior to his environment. Richardson was not a gentleman and he could not rise above the low society

to which he belonged. Fielding, though he lived among bourgeois people, was never absorbed by them. He always remained the aristocrat, the gentleman, observing and criticising common life from an elevation—with profoundly sympathetic interest, but invariably with detachment.

He was unquestionably a religious man. Not being a theologian, he did not much concern himself with particular dogmas and doctrines. But he accepted in substance the orthodox creed, as interpreted by the more latitudinarian churchman of the time. Christianity, however, was to him less a matter right faith than a matter of righteous practice. Fielding's religion perhaps was of the commonsense order,—simple, reasonable, practical, distrustful of mystery, averse from curious speculation, intolerant of enthusiasm.

He was a staunch maintainer of moral principles. Virtue in all forms, he venerated and vice in all forms he hated. His ethical creed like his religious creed was simple enough. He believed in the beauty and profitableness of virtue, in the supreme value of benevolence in the necessity of prudence for the right conduct of life, in the coexistence of good and evil elements in the human constitution and in the importance of fostering the former and suppressing the latter, if men were to achieve happiness. He was also convinced that virtue is concerned not only with outward conduct, but also and chiefly with inward conduct. He did not expect from ordinary people extraordinary morals.

He had faith in downright sincerity and veracity. He hated hypocrisy to the core of his heart. Arnold Bennet writes that "Between Fielding and Meredith no entirely honest novel was written by anybody in England. The fear of the public, the lust of popularity, feminine prudery, sentimentalism, Victorian niceness—one or the other of these things prevented honesty. Fielding both as a man and as a novelist hated disguises and hypocrisy.

He had human sympathy. He loved children. He laid down the principle that the duty of everybody is to render benevolent service to others by any means within his power, whether by his purse or by his pen or by his tongue or by his

hands or at any rate by his prayers. And he certainly practised what he preached.

He was essentially a patriot. He was himself a most thorough Englishman—English in thought and sentiment and temperament—English from top to toe. Scott regarded him as pre-eminently representative of English genius. Hazlitt wrote of his novels : "They are indubitably the most English of all the works of Englishmen" and Thackeray at the end of his famous lecture summed him up as "the English Harry Fielding".

His capacity for work was extraordinary. He was not only a novelist, he was also a dramatist, an essayist, and a political and legal pamphleteer. He managed a theatre and edited four newspapers ; he was a learned authority on the law, an exceptionally able and efficient magistrate, and a political economist who devised an ingenious scheme for providing for the poor at trifling expense to the community. And whatever the work on which he happened to be engaged, he did it with painstaking care and intense application of intellect.

Lastly we should note what Thackeray termed his "manly relish of life". He had a wonderful faculty for enjoyment. His varied experiences—in the villages of the west country, in the sophisticated world of London, in the gay society of Bath—afforded him infinite entertainment. He flung himself into them and found them exquisitely thrilling. Lady Mary wrote : "No man enjoyed life more than he did, though few had less reason to do so. I am persuaded he has known more happy moments than any prince upon earth." It was this that made him a most fascinating companion, and imparted a peculiarly refreshing and vivacious quality to his conversation. Lyttleton told James Beattie that Fielding possessed "more wit and humour" than Swift and Pope and other noted wits of an earlier generation put together. He enjoyed talking as he enjoyed most things, and his irresistible gaiety distinguished him among talkers.

Such was Henry Fielding—surely one of the most humanly attractive figures in the gallery of British worthies. He was, as Dudden writes, "a man of integrity and honour, who never condemned a good thing or commended a bad one ; a man of perfect sincerity, of indomitable bravery, of infinite sympathy

and charity; a man of profound wisdom and most penetrating sagacity; and withal a man of radiant humour, geniality and charm. He had of course his failings; but his noble and amiable personality engages our esteem and admiration, and we look back on him today with something of the same feeling as that with which we contemplate a beloved master and much valued friend.

III

FIELDING'S REALISM

Fielding is called the father of the realistic novel in England. It was as a reaction against the sentimentality of Richardson's *Pamela* that he started his campaign for realism in novels. The extravagant sentimentality of Richardson occurred to him as a fit subject for burlesque, and therefore, he promptly began the story of *Joseph Andrews*, Pamela's similarly tempted and equally immune brother.

"His aim in these novels was," writes Dudden, 'to present a strictly veracious picture of that real human world which he had so diligently observed and studied. That was the primary thing. He had no use for fanciful idealizations. He did not desire to describe the world as it ought to be, or as he should have liked it to be; he wished to describe it simply as it was. In other words, his endeavour was to reproduce Human Nature as closely and accurately as he was able: nor did he consciously allow himself to temper with the material which Nature supplied. Thus, he did not attempt, like the Victorians, to gloss over what was hideous and disgusting. Nor did he as Hogarth was inclined to do, omit what was delightful and beautiful from his picture. He did not heighten the lights or deepen the shadows. He just drew what he saw, and the whole of what he saw, with perfect honesty and candour. "Truth to Nature" was his watchword.

"This does not of course imply that Fielding cherished no ideals. He was not merely a portrayer of the life of his time ; he was also a critic of that life. While he pictured realistically the eighteenth century social world, it is evident both from his manner of handling his materials and from his comments thereon, that he had constantly in mind the vision of a better and happier state of existence than that which he so accurately described. His aim was, by showing men and women what they actually were, to shame them into an endeavour to become what they might be, but actually were not."

Also, in imagining real life, he was not content merely to produce a literal copy of it – to transcribe precisely, in the style of a careful newspaper reporter, what he has actually seen and heard and known. It is true that, in his fiction, he kept, for the most part, within the bounds of his own personal experience. "I believe I might aver that I have little more than I have seen" (*Joseph Andrews*), he once declared. But though he put into his books what he had himself observed, he did not put it in the exact form in which he had himself observed it. He translated his experiences : He did not merely record them. All the items were passed through the alembic of art, and redistilled into new composition.

"There is another point, Fielding's realism was not of that inferior kind which concerns itself only or chiefly with the faithful representation of the surface of life. He did indeed picture that surface convincingly and brilliantly ; but he was also intent on bringing to light what lay beneath. In his delineation of reality he exercised that "power of the mind" which he called 'invention', and defined as "a quick and sagacious penetration into the true essence of all the objects of our contemplation." (*Tom Jones IX-i*). Thus he endeavoured always to exhibit, not merely the bare fact, but also the idea expressed by the fact, not merely the particular action, but also the general law or principle which it exemplified ; not merely the individual person, but also the universal truths of human personality. Thanks to his faculty of penetrating through the superficial to the essential, he was able, while he depicted with remarkable fidelity the real life of his own time, to display simultaneously real life as it is lived in all places and all ages."

Fielding remains unsurpassed even today in the realistic portrayal of the contemporary society—the habits and customs, the actions and pursuits, the scenes and conditions of the time. "His work was", says Walter Allen in his *The English Novel* with that of his friend Hogarth, "the most powerful artistic expression of the social conscience of the age."

Thus to conclude, "the quality of realism in his novels assures them a precious documentary value. Town manners, the pleasures and amusements of the capital, country society organised round the squire, and where the vicar occupies for a time, a singularly less dignified place ; stage-coaches, inns and the incidents of the road, the underworld of vice and crime, have here left traces sufficiently accurate in themselves to be of use to historian. As a magistrate, Fielding knows well the conflicts of the penal code and the instincts ; he recounts them with the exactitude of a well-informed witness, and the zeal of a reformer. For he has a generous conception of justice ; no doubt his ideas on the right to punish, on the responsibility of the criminal, on the social regime, do not go beyond the range of vision of his times but he quickens them through the susceptibility of a noble conscience ; he has felt and shown the cruelty of certain legal punishments, the scandals of judicial administration. His calm, objective work is at times animated by a human ardour, just as the independence of his thought does not dwell on the inequalities which his age deemed necessary." (Cazamian).

IV

FIELDING'S ART OF CHARACTERISATION

The greatest quality of a great novelist is the power of creating characters which appear to the critical and uncritical readers alike. Force or charm of style, adroitness in storytelling, the gift of observation and of acumen, these are all subservient to that imaginative vigour which through language fashions a

human being and induces him with identity as unmistakable as that of our living acquaintances. And Fielding occupies a unique place in this art of characterization. He might be called the greatest character-monger in English literature save Shakespeare and Dickens. Such a collection of human figures—so solid and real, so vital, so varied—is not to be found in the works of any earlier English writer, except Shakespeare.

As at first sight, Fielding's fierce eye for externals appears to be that of caricaturist, we expect his characters to be 'flat', in E. M. Forsters's sense of the word. But this is not at all. Flat characters are representations of *idees fixes* : typical flat characters are Smollett's Hawser Trunnion and Dickens's Mrs. Micawber. They are characters incapable of surprising us. Now, most of Fielding's personages in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* are episodic ; they appear only once, and pass, but they still remain in our memories and so cannot be called flat.

The following are the main points of Fielding's art of characterization which have been enumerated by Dudden :

"First, *they are amazingly alive*. This is true not only of the major figures, but also of the vast majority of the minor ones. We can hardly believe that they are mere fictions. They are "alive, full of blood, full of breath", as are real people. They impress themselves on our minds, as real people do, and continue to exist in our memories even when the events and incidents with which they were concerned have been more or less forgotten. That is indeed the supreme achievement of characterization. An inferior novelist can write a story which will be long remembered, but only a master can create characters so palpitating with life that, when recollection of details of the story has become blurred, they, the personages in the story, still remain unforgettable.

Secondly, *his characters are drawn according to Nature*. It is true that he did not hesitate to exaggerate, in some instances, particular traits and features. The comical peculiarities of Mrs. Slipshop, for example, or of Partridge or of Colonel Bath, are purposely magnified and heightened. But even in these cases the accentuation is not so violent as to render the figures unnatural. And by far the greater number of his people are very little, if at all overdrawn. This close imitation of Nature is

preserved in the representation of the moral constitution of the characters. Richardson, in his characterization, made the mistake of unduly simplifying his figures, tending unnaturally to portray them as either wholly good or wholly evil—as angels or devils, sheep or goats. The same tendency is observable, later on in Dickens, Fielding, however, avoided this error. He knew that real men and women (with very rare exceptions) are by no means simple, they are mixed beings curiously compounded of good and evil elements; and as mixed beings (with very rare exceptions—notably Blifil) he pictured his folk, painting them, not in unnaturally brilliant or lurid colours, but in the subdued half-tints of actual life.

Thirdly, *all Fielding's characters are most clearly distinguished*. There is no vagueness, or indefiniteness in the presentation of them. They are delineated with masterly firmness and incisiveness, so that we feel, as it were, sure of them, and can think and speak of them without danger of confusion or misconception. Almost everyone of them indeed, impresses us as an individual of most undeniable individuality, plainly differentiated from all others of the same type, temperament, profession, or class. And this distinctness of characterization is achieved, not usually by the crude method of underlining and reiterating peculiar mannerisms (tricks of speech, gesture and the like)—though there are a few instances of this in the novels—but by tactful exercise of the art of selection. Out of the mass of traits that constitute the make up of a character, Fielding with unerring judgement selected and focussed attention on just those only which are most distinguishing and give the character its peculiar stamp.

Fourthly, *in displaying the inner life of his characters*, he used the instrument of dialogue, and did not attempt to imitate the minute psychological analysis of Richardson. Very occasionally, it is true, he did undertake to give a verbal description of mental processes, as in his account of the conflict between pride and passion in the bosom of Lady Booby, or of that between avarice and conscience in the heart of Black George. But with him exhibition of analysis is rare. It is a mistake, however, to imagine that his knowledge of the human mind and heart was inferior to Richardson's. He had an equally

penetrating understanding of the 'internalities'—of the stirrings of thought and fluctuations of emotion in the obscure depths of human consciousness. But his method of exposing the inner life of his creatures was different from that of his rival. Richardson revealed that life by means of what were in reality soliloquies, reported at length in diaries and letters; Fielding revealed it, as did Shakespeare before him, by means of dialogue. He was aware, that, for the disclosure of sentiments and motives, very elaborate analysis is not necessary. As a rule, it is enough to make the character talk. A short conversation, even quite a few sentences, brought out in the proper manner at the proper moment, can do the business.

Fifthly, *all his characters are almost invariably interesting.* There are, of course, a few exceptions. Farmer Wilson is long winded and dull; Heartfree, and Mrs. Heartfree—are on, the whole, boring, simple. Mrs. Miller and faithful Joseph Atkinson are virtuously tedious. There is something lacking in all these. They may be correctly portrayed—there are numbers of unattractive people in the world—but they fail to excite curiosity or compel attention. On the other hand, the vast majority of Fielding's characters are highly interesting. They intrigue us and give us pleasure. We welcome their advent, enjoy their company and conversation, and look forward to meeting them again. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that they are personally amiable or morally admirable. Lactitia Snap, and Fanny Matthews, Parson Barnabas and Parson Trulliber, Squire Western and 'Petere' Pounce, are not by any means laudable personages, or such as we should wish to have much to do with in the flesh. But in the pages of the novels, how agreeable, how engaging, how thoroughly entertaining they are? Even the odious Blifil is interesting—at any rate in his piggish boyhood; if not in his wicked maturity. And this power of making his characters, whether virtuous or vicious acceptable to the reader is one of the marks of a novelist of genius. It is not enough that his people should be lifelike and real, and that they should conduct themselves in a natural and probable manner. If they are to be wholly successful they must be also, in some way or other enjoyable or impress. Most of Fielding's characters are artistic triumphs, because in them the latter requirement of

being interesting as well as the former requirement of being in nature, is fulfilled.

Sixthly, in some respects *these characters, notwithstanding their antique dresses and manners, are curiously* modern. They exhibit many of the characteristics of present day men and women. For instance, they know all about sex matters, and talk about them frankly, without timidity or mock-modesty. They have no illusions. They look out on the world cynically, finding in it no mystery and very little romance. It appears to most of them a nasty world, and they try to forget its nastiness by plunging into pleasures frequently gross, though sometimes refined. If misfortune comes to them, they accept it stoically without angry complaint or sentimental self-pity. They are not destitute of virtues ; but except (in rare instances) they are of the earth earthy : religion, even when they pay it the tribute of formal respect, has little hold on them. Born into a world which is horribly disordered and which they are powerless to amend, they just stumble on blindly, absurdly, and pathetically, without knowing or much caring whether they are going. In all this Fielding's people are strikingly akin to the people of our own age ; and to those who are depicted in the most recent literature.

Seventhly, *"in the correlation of characters and incidents Fielding showed exceptional skill."* It must be remembered that in his time two types of novel were in existence. There was the novel of incident and there was the novel of character. In the former the main business was the telling of a story, the relation of exciting episodes and adventures, while the portrayal of character, though not absent, was subordinate. In the latter the interest was concentrated on the characterization, the incidents of the story being of secondary importance. The former type was represented by the novels of Defoe, and the earlier works of Smollett ; the exponent of the latter type was Richardson, the inaugurator of the psychological novel. Each of these types, however, was more or less onesided. An ideal novel ought to combine the excellence of both. It should present both incidents and characters, and should so adjust and harmonize them that the incidents spring up and take shape from the characters, while the characters are revealed and

brought out by the incidents. In *Tom Jones* this ideal is almost perfectly realized. Here both the incidents and characters are attended to, not, however, separately and alternately, but together. They are brought into the closest relation with one another, and made as they ought to be: complementary and independent. In this respect *Tom Jones* must be acknowledged a masterpiece. Such a consummate correlation of incidents and characters had never before been exhibited in English fiction; and indeed it has never been surpassed, and seldom equalled since.

Eighthly, *"the number of his character creations is remarkable."* His books are 'full of folk', representing all sorts, classes and conditions. His aim was to provide, by means of a number of examples, a faithful picture of Human Nature. But his picture of Human Nature, though wonderfully comprehensive was limited in two respects. First it did not include persons of the very highest rank, who seemed to him too artificial and conventional to be interesting; and secondly it did not include extraordinary and rare persons—saints and poets and heroes—persons animated by grand passions, inspired by sublime enthusiasms, consecrated to supreme endeavours—of whom he himself had no experience. The crowded world depicted in the novels is, in fact, first the world of the middle and lower classes, and secondly the world of ordinary, everyday men and women, who have no propensity for lofty thought or profound emotion. Within these limits Fielding's knowledge of mankind was thorough; but there are aspects of human nature which did not come within his purview.

It should also be noted that many of Fielding's characters are drawn from recognizable models. Thus Sophia and Amelia are undoubtedly portraits of Fielding's beautiful first wife. Tom Jones combines something of Fielding himself, with a good deal more that is not Fielding at all. Other instances may also be seen in the same way. But it is his greatness that from whatever sources he had drawn his characters, they are unquestionably real men and women.

"Finally in connection with Fielding's characterization, two brief observations may be made. First, he was the creator of the two most attractive heroines in the literature of the period.

Indeed, the only heroine who only approaches them is Richardson's Clarissa ; and Clarissa though a young woman of a noble type superbly drawn, lacks charm. She excites our pity ; but she is, if one may dare say so, too prudish, too proud, too passionless, to inspire affection. As for Smollett's heroines—the divine Marcissa, the divine Emilia, the divine Aurelia, they are mere unsubstantial phantoms that stir in us no emotion whatsoever. But Sophia and Amelia are infinitely detectable. They will ever continue to be admired and loved, as almost faultless impersonations of ideal girlhood and womanhood. The second observation is that Fielding was the first English novelist to introduce lifelike children into his books. It is true, of course, that the art of childportraiture has greatly improved since his time. His sketches of childhood cannot be compared with the finished studies produced by Dickens. Yet by his pictures of children, who really talk and behave like children, he inaugurated a new and delightful development in English fiction." (Dudden).

All these abovementioned qualities in the art of characterization of Fielding were the result of Fielding's style and mind. "Like the style of Thackeray, who learnt much from him, but not enough, Fielding's is that of a man talking to us as his case. It is direct unaffected, the product of a mind stood with knowledge of men and of books—he is always driving a point home with an apt quotation, from the classics or from Shakespeare. He is telling a story the action of which has long been over. Action and characters, therefore, exist not only in the context of the story, but also in the context of the author's mind, a mind decisive in quality, with firm views on human nature and behaviour. We feel that Fielding knows everything there is to know about his characters even though he does not tell us all. They are so real to him, that even though he may give us no more than a glimpse of them, they become real for us. Behind every simple statement of Fielding's, we feel the force of a deep and varied experience of life, an experience that, however, bitter as it may have been, has not darkened the essential humanity of his nature." (Walter Allen)

Thus Fielding had a wonderful art of characterization which enabled him to fix our interest, to waken our sympathy, to seize upon our credulity, so that we believe in his people.

V

FIELDING'S PLOTS

Fielding is distinguished not only as a creative genius, but also as a constructive artist. He was the first in England to elaborate the architecture of the novel. "To him is due the credit of establishing what may be regarded as the standard form, and of making the variation possible. Defoe's patient realism had shown how far delineation of outward and visible things could go, in a hybrid form without either the seal of history or the authentication of pure art : he had displayed the whole economy of certain sections of life, and produced a likeness apparently as inexhaustible in its details as reality itself. Richardson had applied an analogous method to the inner world of feeling and motive and the cultivation of selfhood. But fiction that was afraid to call itself fiction, and had to rely for support on anything extraneous to itself, was obviously incomplete and unsatisfactory. Defoe and Richardson had merely got together the materials, provided the stuff out of which the autonomous work of art might be made ; they had not realised what further industry was demanded of the artist. Fielding took the material, and cast it into new and fully coherent shapes without any distortion of the essential truth. He is the Shakespeare of English fiction." (Baker)

Thus Fielding advanced greatly on the achievement of Richardson. Although Richardson had some idea of constructive technique in his novels and in *Clarissa*, his best novel in point of form, the main theme is kept steadily in view, and the history moves forward slowly but surely to a logical conclusion, yet Richardson was hampered by his method of relating a story by means of letters—a method which entails a great deal of repetition or going backwards and forwards over the same grounds and consequently an almost intolerable slowness in the unfolding of the story. "Why Sir," cried Dr. Johnson, "If you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment." Thus Richardson was not a master

of structure but Fielding was. He did not, however, become so all at once. We see in his career as a novelist, a gradual development of his skill in the construction of plots.

"His first novel *Joseph Andrews* is still on the whole a tale of picaresque type. The plan was not clearly thought out from the start, but almost seems to have evolved extempore as the author proceeded and the denouement is brought about not by the logic of events but by an arbitrary contrivance. Between *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, Fielding learned the secret of constructive craftsmanship. The latter novel is indeed a masterpiece of the regular design. The plan already settled in the author's mind before he began to write, is gradually and systematically unfolded. The action moves steadily forward—unhasting, unresting, rising constantly in interest to predetermined issue. Neither characters nor incidents are introduced for their own sake ; all are made to contribute, in some way or the other to the working out of the main theme. The conclusion, if not strictly inevitable is the natural and probable result of what has gone before. It is a marvellously coherent book. Every part has its necessary place in the evolution of the whole. There is hardly anything which could have been omitted as irrelevant or superfluous.

Tom Jones is thus unique in its structural excellence. By "structure" we mean the arrangement and interrelation of all the elements in a book, as dominated by the general character of the whole. Sometimes, it is used to mean "structure of action" alone, that is plot. But certainly, as Richardson's *Clarissa* shows, the total architecture of a novel involves a great deal more than plot and we have to have some word for that architecture. The word "structure" will do, and we shall distinguish structure, then, from the narrative arrangement of episodes, the plot, plot being but one element among the many that constitute a structure and *Tom Jones* has a far more elaborate plot than any novel of the earlier writers, elaborate not only in the sense that the book contains an immense number of incidents and episodes, but also in the sense that all these episodes are knit, as intimate cause and effect, into a large single action obeying a single impulse from start to finish. And we should clearly understand that a great significance is given to

the novel by its intricate action. Thus the "aesthetic necessity" of elaborate plot in Fielding's novel is given by Dorothy Van Ghent in "*The English Novel*" : "The episodes must cumulate functionally towards a final, representative revelation of character ; but because the significance of this revelation is for all men in the given society, the episodes must illustrate subtle varieties of character and interaction, at the same time representing the complexities of human nature and contributing towards the final revelation which will be, although narrowed down to hero and villain, symbolic of all those complexities. The book must therefore have, both variety of episode and 'unity of action.' "

Tom Jones is thus the masterpiece of Fielding and is superbly constructed, yet his last novel, *Amelia* is poorly composed. But to have produced even a single example of an almost perfect form was a very great achievement. How great it was is shown by the rarity of such examples in later literature. Smollett, for instance, was not a designer, but confessedly only an imitator of the picaresque method of his age. Scott wrote most of his novels without any coherent plan, the finely wrought, *Bride of Lammermoor* is a brilliant exception to his ordinary practice. Thackeray did indeed produce a superb work of art in *Esmond* and another rather less perfect in *The Vanity Fair*, but as a rule he paid little attention to construction, allowing his stories to meander unrestrained and shape themselves. As for Dickens, most of his books are hardly more than groups of incidents ; '*Great Expectations*' is his nearest approach to a well-knit novel. Thus from the time of Fielding to that of Thomas Hardy a regrettable slovenliness in respect of design and construction was an almost constant characteristic of English fiction. Now and again some exceptional masterpiece suddenly flashed upon the world but sustained exquisiteness of constructive technique is hardly to be found except in the writings of Jane Austen.

"Admirable, however, though his pattern structure, was, it has not entirely escaped criticism. Apart from the degressive addresses to the reader, two points in the form of the Fielding novels have been objected to—the inset stories and the conclusions. The inset stories consisting partly of little tales within the tale and partly of excessively detailed interpolated accounts of the earlier lives of some of the characters—are certainly not defensible. They have for the most part little or no relevance

to the central story, from which they unnecessarily distract attention. The most that can be said in their excuse is that they were a literary convention which had come down from the distant past through a long succession of prose and verse romances, and which lingered on as late as *Pickwick Papers* of Dickens.

As to *the conclusions*, it is pointed out that Fielding's strong predilection for happy endings sometimes led him to resort to extremely artificial expedients,—lucky coincidences and recognitions ; with consequential revolution of fortune—for winding up his stories in the way that he desired. This criticism does not, indeed apply to *Tom Jones* where the denouement is the unforced result of the preceding history. But in *Joseph Andrews* and *Amelia* the closes have been obviously engineered, and must therefore be regarded as objectionable from the standpoint of art."

VI

FIELDING'S ART OF NARRATION

"The story of a novel may be related in three ways : (1) It may be recounted in a series of letters or similar documents. This was the method of Richardson and was also adopted by Smollett in his *Humphrey Clinker*. Though it is the worst possible way of describing a succession of incidents, it is excellent for the analysis and exhibition of character. (2) Again the story may be put in the mouth of the principal personage concerned therein. This was the plan followed by Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe*, by Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*, by Goldsmith in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, by Dickens in *David Copperfield*, and by Charlotte Bronte in *Jane Eyre*. It has the merit of presenting the story with something of the vividness and liveliness of a personal narrative recited by a living voice, but it has also the drawback of restricting the range of narrator by allowing him to speak only of what he has himself known and experienced.

To get rid of this limitation—Wilkie Collins and R. L. Stevenson for example, have caused the history to be related not merely by one, but by two or more persons, each contributing apart. (3) Then thirdly the story may be told directly by the author, who is conventionally supposed to be omniscient. This was the method of Fielding, Scott, Thackeray, and it is the one which has been favoured by the overwhelming majority of novelists. Its advantages, indeed, are obvious. It enables the author to develop his narrative in the fullest, freest, clearest and most straightforward manner possible, and also affords him opportunities of interrelating at suitable places, personal explanations and observations." (Dudden)

"Fielding did not adopt the autobiographical pose of Defoe or the epistolary method of Richardson. Instead of making the shallow pretence that he was writing an authentic history, he did not disguise the fact that he was writing a novel. He openly adopted the story-teller's time-honoured convention of knowing everything about his characters and their affairs. This convention commonly known as the omniscient point of view, solves a multitude of difficulties for the novelist, but brings in turn its own problems as we have seen. Richardson was hampered by the necessity of devising plausible occasions for letter writing, as a result of which he was inclined to keep his heroine away from her family and friends. The more he tried to extend the range of his novel, the more he had to resort to clumsy and laborious devices to get all his material into the form of correspondence.

"Wishing to keep clear of the confused improbabilities of romance, Defoe adopted the point of view of the chief participant in the action. He thus sacrificed range and depth in the interest of simplicity and verisimilitude. Richardson was superior to Defoe in handling the time element and in securing an impression of immediacy, but his method of relating everything from a point close at hand produced a maze of details sometimes difficult to traverse.

"For dealing with an extended subject, the omniscient point of view is greatly superior to the methods of Defoe and Richardson. The omniscient novelist can employ a variety of methods. He can summarize, interpret or explain in any-

way he likes. He can, upon occasion, limit his omniscience and represent events with no more light thrown upon them that is shed by the characters themselves. In other words, such a novelist can shift back and forth between narration and a more purely dramatic form of representation."

But Fielding is not content to be a mere narrator of events. He, in addition to adopting omniscient point of view, also assumed the role of interpreter, commentator and critic. It was his habit to break off his narrative at frequent intervals so that he might come forward in his own person and that, as it were, familiarly, and confidentially with his readers. His communications were of various kinds. Sometimes he would explain details in the related history which might seem puzzling or startling, sometimes he would comment on the characters and their actions, sometimes he would expatiate on the theory of his art, or on some problem of life and conduct. These addressed in *propria persona* to the readers--which may be compared with a showman's explanation of the motives of his puppets—were a characteristic feature of Fielding's novel work. He deliberately declined to efface himself. He insisted on his right to intervene personally in his narrative, whenever and wherever he might deem such intervention desirable.

"Was this personal intrusion of the novelist into his novels an offence against literary art? The common doctrine is that in the interest of realism and to preserve the illusion of truth which the narrative is designed to create, the story-teller should keep himself out of his story. And the doctrine is supported by so great an authority as Aristotle who gave special praise to Homer, because unlike other poets he consistently refrained from thrusting himself in his proper person, into his poems. The theory is probably sound. But there are exceptions to every rule, and it can hardly be denied that Fielding's fiction would have lost half its charm and value had he consented to practise the artistic self-suppression which Aristotle recommended. It is not merely for the sake of stories that we read and re-read his novels. It is quite as much and perhaps still more for the sake of those exquisite parabasis—passages, wherein an author of vast original genius who had read, observed and meditated much, without ever allowing himself

to be fettered by traditions and conventions expounds candidly his ideas about literature and life. Those comment as fresh and impressive today as when they were first uttered may surley be regarded as permissible." (Dudden)

Apart from this intrinsic interest of the comments, as containing an "amount of acute and profound exploration of human nature which it would be difficult to match and impossible to surpass elsewhere" (Saintsbury : *The English Novel*) it is claimed that they can be justified by the principle of variety and also on the ground that they give a certain objective reality to the persons and events that they discuss. (G. T. Winchester : *Some Principles of Literary Criticism*).

VII
FIELDING'S HUMOUR

The outstanding characteristic of Fielding's art is his humour which bubbles up everywhere in his works, and gives liveliness and sparkle to every narrative and discussion. It is distinguished by four qualities, as Dudden has pointed out "(i) First it is amazingly exuberant. The fountain of mirth is never exhausted ; it wells up, brims over, pours itself out unstintedly . So abundant a flow of humour is hardly to be found in any English writer except Dickens. (ii) Secondly, it is singularly unforced. It plays, easily, lightly, naturally, without any suggestion of premeditation or deliberate contrivance. Fielding did not lay himself out to be humorous ; he was humorous because he could not help it. (iii) Thirdly, it is prevailingly genial . It could indeed be better on occasion, but in general it is tolerant and benign. (iv) Fourthly, it is exercised realities. It does not disport itself with whimsies, fantasies, and bizarreries. It confines itself to the facts of nature and life. The real world, in Fielding's view, provides sufficient material for the humorist. 'Life', he said, 'everywhere furnishes an accurate observer with the ridiculous' ". (Preface to *Joseph Andrews*).

In Fielding we see many species of humour. In all there are four kinds of humour.

(i) First we have the crude type of humour which Tobias Smollett relished—"the humour of rough and tumble horse-play, high jinks and practical jokes". But this type of humour is exhibited only in *Joseph Andrews*. In *Tom Jones*, there are very few instances of it and in *Amelia* none at all. As Dudden has said, "As his literary powers matured, Fielding grew less and less disposed to minister to the vulgar taste for mere buffooneries."

(ii) Satirical humour, however, pervades all the writings of Fielding. "It was, indeed, his favourite method of criticizing lighter vices and follies. As to his employment of this instrument, he very seldom used it to expose or ridicule individuals. Derisive attacks on individual persons seemed to him indecorous. His humorous satire was therefore directed, first, against various classes or groups (persons, and doctors, beaus and booby-squires, waiting-maids and fine ladies; Methodists and Jacobites); secondly, against contemporary society in general (its manners and morals, occupations and amusements, principles or lack of principles); and thirdly, against humanity as a whole (the fundamental weaknesses perpetually inherent in the essential nature of mankind).

'This humorous satire is instructive and corrective. Its object, as Fielding put it, is 'to hold the glass to thousands in their closets, that they may contemplate their deformity, and endeavour to reduce it' (Preface to *Joseph Andrews*.) If men can once be made to realize how foolish or wrong they are, there is some hope that, for very shame, they will attempt amendment. The old classical formula, *ridendo corrigese mores*, suggested his procedure. He rightly believed that rage and vituperation are unlikely to correct anyone, but that some improvement may be effected by good-natured raillery and banter. He really liked his fellow-creatures, notwithstanding their idiocies and errors; and was willing to treat them leniently; provided that they were not guilty of any gross and detestable faults. Hence he preferred to flick them with ridicule rather than to lash them with vehement censure. Laughing satire seemed the best corrective of the irregularities of the

age." (Dudden.) This humour of Fielding is nowhere more pleasantly expressed than in the picture of the lovable Parson Adams—good-hearted, absurd, and most impractical of men, like a full-blooded Don Quixote.

(iii) Thirdly, there is that species of humour, which "disports itself with the display of addities and incongruities of all sorts. Such variations from the normal and customary—at any rate when there is no harm in them - seem ridiculous to ordinary people. They furnish indeed, the commonest material for mirth. But this humour, which makes merry with the exhibition of eccentricity, differs from satirical humour, in that it has no serious ulterior purpose. It is not instructive it is not corrective. Its sole function is to excite laughter.

"There is certainly no deficiency of such gay irresponsible humour in Fielding's writings. He had a keen eye for oddities and delighted in making fun of them, Thus he sometimes entertains us with the freakish peculiarities of personalities—the quaint simplicity of Parson Adams, the consummate foolishness of Partridge, the stupendous heroics of Colonel Bath. At other times he raises a laugh by some incongruous situation, such as the discovery of the champion of 'the natural beauty of virtue', ignominiously crouching behind the rug in Molly Seagrim's bedroom. Or again, he makes merry with eccentricities of speech—the malapropism of Slipslop, the pedantic diction of Parson Adams and Parson Supple, and the colourful language of Squire Western in *Tom Jones*. No abnormalities indeed escaped his notice. Whatsoever things were queer, unusual, out of the way—he marked them all, and delightfully reproduced them for our entertainment." (Dudden) Thus we see that this type of humour is found in all his works and that Fielding is at his best in such examples.

(iv) Fourthly, there is ironical* humour, and of this

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*"Irony in its simplest form, is the deliberate use of words which literally express a meaning opposite to that which the speaker really desires and intends to convey; as when for the purpose of ridicule, laudatory expressions are employed to indicate condemnation. In its more elaborate form, irony is the stimulated adoption of a point of view opposite to that

we find two kinds in Fielding's works. "There is a light and sportive irony, flavouring and salting scores of passages in the novels and communicating a sharp but pleasurable sting to the mind of the reader. This is the irony of an experienced man of the world, reviewing with Olympian serenity and tolerance the peccancies and perversities of mankind. It is on the whole indulgent. It criticizes, but does not condemn. On the other hand, there is a grim species of irony, which is employed when the author is sternly intent on castigating what is false and wrong. This severe species—scathing, relentless, terrible is most impressively exemplified in the wonderful *Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great.*" (Dudden).

VIII

FIELDING'S PATHOS

"If Fielding excelled in humour, he was also skilled in pathos. The themes of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* are gay and mirthful, and (except, perhaps the climax of Tom's miseries in the Gatehouse) these tales contain nothing calculated to stir up tragic emotion. In *Jonathan Wild* indeed, we find one or two touching passages in connection with the Heartfrees—especially the account of Mrs. Heartfrees' meeting with the husband when he was about to be led to execution. But it is in *Amelia*, the last of the novels, that Fielding proves his competence for pathetic writing. The story of the heroine's trials is at times extremely poignant, and is related with tender feeling yet with perfect simplicity and restraint.

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really held. The ironist pretends to share the mentality of his opponent, accepts his opponent's case as though, it were his own, states his opponent's arguments as though they were his own, and carries them out to their logical conclusions, when the absurdity of the original position becomes manifest. By the ostensible defence of the doctrine or policy which he is really attacking, he shows that it is indefensible."

"For the successful treatment of a pathetic situation two things are necessary. First, the situation must be really pathetic in itself; and secondly, the pathos must not be over-emphasized. Fielding complied with both requirements. In his pathetic passages the subject is adequate to excite sympathy and pity. He never attempted as Sterne did, to extract pathos from too fragile material. The facts which he related, quite apart from his manner of relating them, are in themselves sufficiently moving. Again, in the presentation of his material, he carefully avoided overstatement. He would not condescend to work on the feelings of his readers by harrowing descriptions. He had never any use for 'sob-stuff'. And in this respect, he may be contrasted with Dickens. The latter novelist, it is true, could and sometimes did, picture the sorrow and pain of life with beautiful and touching simplicity. More often, however, his pathetic writing was spoiled by artificial elaboration. He was seldom content merely to record what was pathetic; he must needs dwell upon it, dilate upon it, write it up. In his accounts for example, of the deaths of Nora and little Nell, we are disagreeably conscious of the presence of the author, deliberately striving by every device that he could think of to stimulate emotion. Similar is the case with Richardson. Richardson unquestionably had a great command of pathos. Pathetic situations abound in his books. But the minuteness and diffuseness which are of the essence of his method weaken the force of his pathetic passages. Even the finest of them all—Bedford's account of the death of Clarissa—is perhaps over elaborated. But in Fielding's work nothing is of that sort. He described his pathetic scenes simply, concisely, sincerely, without any straining after effect, without the least touch of affectation. As in Thackeray's final emotional pieces, the pathos lies just below the surface of the narrative; the very reserve of the narrator makes the sadness which he reveals the more impressive." (Dudden)

IX

DIDACTIC NOTE IN FIELDING'S NOVELS

Thomas Love Peacock maintained that "to be lasting a novel must contain essential wisdom" and that the novel that was written for "mere amusement" would "certainly not pass into posterity." And among the supreme writers of thoughtful and thought-stimulating fiction in England he is calmly aloof, never taking sides, smiling at the vagaries and affectations of all alike. By the delicate balancing of opposites he will bring about that equilibrium which is the end of disinterested comedy. Thus says Baker about the plan of Fielding.

It should be noted that neither the idea of a comic epic, nor that of a prose epic was new. A comic epic had long ago been produced in the lost *Margites* of Homer, which according to Aristotle bore the same relation to comedy that the *Illiad* and *Odyssey* did to tragedy. Another example was the pseudo-Homeric *Betrachomyomachia*, which had been translated into English by Thomas Parnell (1717). Again the conception of a prose epic was familiar. It had been defended by Le Bossu in the *Traite du Poeme epique* (1675)—a classic to which Fielding was unquestionably indebted for many of his ideas on the literary art. The contention was that the work might with propriety be styled an epic, if it had all the constituent parts of an epic poem—fable, action, characters, sentiments and devotion —with the single exception of metre, which ought not to be deemed essential. Examples of prose epic were afforded by the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus, and of Fenelon's greatly admired *Les Adventures de Technique* (1699).

Thus combining the current ideas of the comic epic and the prose epic, Fielding elaborated a new literary genre, 'the comic epic in prose.'

"Fielding believed in the didactic function of fiction. He shared Richardson's view that the purpose of this species of literature is not only to amuse, but also to instruct. His idea of the kind of instruction which ought to be imported was, indeed, very different from Richardson's ; but he heartily endorsed his

general principle. His own novels were consciously and deliberately designed to convey sound teaching.

"It is acknowledged that excessive didacticism is ruinous to a work of realistic art. The first duty of the realist is to present a faithful picture of life, as he sees and knows it. That the picture should to some extent be coloured by his deeply felt convictions is inevitable ; but the convictions must never be so ostentatiously obtruded as to distract attention from the picture presented. Always the picture is the main thing ; the moral to be drawn from it is at most but secondary. In short, a realistic fiction is artistically censurable when it is primarily didactic.

"How far, from this point of view, is Fielding's novel work open to criticism ? We need not here take account of *Jonathan Wild*. The book is a satire, cast in the form of an allegorical tale and cannot with strict propriety be classified as a novel. Of the regular novels, *Amelia* notwithstanding its great merits, is too heavily loaded with didactic matter. The author deliberately laid himself out to expose the evils of his time—the corrupt practices of officials, the abuses of the prisons and sponging houses and magistrate's courts, the dwelling and gambling and sexual deliquencies of society. His intensely serious purpose was to awaken the public conscience, and if possible bring about at least some partial reformation. And this purpose is certainly too much to the fore. We have an uncomfortable suspicion that the story was written less for its own sake than to be the vehicle of propaganda.

This criticism, however, does not apply to *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. Both these stories, it is true, and particularly the latter are definitely didactic works. Instruction is inextricably woven into their very texture. Nor is this all. For Fielding was not content to leave the stories to teach their own lessons. He could not refrain from interpolating comments, to make quite sure that the lessons should not be overlooked. Yet in these books, the didactic element is not, on the whole, unduly paraded. Even the chorus-comments are not superfluous. They do not divert our attention from the picture, they only interpret what is exhibited, and help us to appreciate its deeper implications. Judicious instruction of this kind, which

really illuminates and explicates the subject, is in no wise detrimental to a work of art." (Dudden)

X

FIELDING'S STYLE

Fielding was the first in England to give novel its structural principles; he was also the first to give it a gracious literary form. The style of Richardson is often slipshod, ungrammatical, and undistinguished. We go to Richardson not for the sake of the manner, but for the matter. Fielding has on the other hand a very graceful, though easy style. "Among his thousands of sentences we rarely find one which is clumsy and unwieldy, and still more rarely one which violates the rules of grammatical construction. Repitition, circumlocution, exclamation, *cliche*, and bombast—the besetting vices of the bad stylist—are scrupulously avoided. The facts or truths which the author desired to communicate are set forth simply and with beautiful perspicuity" (Dudden). The following are the salient characteristics of Fielding's style. First we see "the controlled power of description, which with the greatest economy of words, enables us to visualize scenes and persons." Secondly, we note, "the lightness of touch in the humorous passages". Thirdly, the noble eloquence often displayed in the exposition of grave themes." Fourthly, "the intimate conversational tone of the asides addressed by the author to the reader." Fifthly, "the all pervading flavour of scholarship and learning distinguishing the work of the best scholar among British novelists", and sixthly, "the abundance of suggestive and illuminating phrases, thrown out seemingly improptu, and far more effective in their unpremeditated felicity than the artfully composed apopthegms of epigrammatists and—phrasemongers."

"If, however, it were necessary to characterize this style by a single word, the word selected might perhaps be *adequate*.

Perfect adequacy to its purpose is its outstanding feature. The form is adequate to the subject, whatever the subject may happen to be. Fielding desired no more than this. He never attempted to attract attention by 'fine writing'. Of what the French call *apprent* there is nothing in his work. He admired and cultivated simplicity. Using the natural and familiar and language of ordinary life, with due attention to the selection and orderly arrangement of the words, he aimed only at saying what he had to say as fully and clearly and accurately. And the result is eminently satisfying. The novel is here presented in a literary dress worthy of it." (Dudden). The style of the novel, was thus also a real contribution of Fielding.

XI

FIELDING'S THEOERY OF THE NOVEL —'A COMIC EPIC IN PROSE'

Fielding described *Joseph Andrews,* in its preface, as an example of something new in fiction, the comic epic in prose and although *Joseph Andrews* was too slight a piece to come into that category, the word may be applied to *Tom Jones* with admirable propriety. "It is a word, as Fielding remarks, implying some amplitude of scale, an action, ' extended and comprehensive" a great variety of characters. Fiction that is of epical scope will afford a panoramic view of a given epoch ; it will endeavour to bring out the general tendencies of that epoch by means of a scheme or plot showing events working out naturally to a decisive issue, and of a group of representative characters, implicated together, and standing out clearly from the random concourse of humanity in the background. That which is comic or absurd will be presented ironically.

First, *the comic epic differs obviously* from the serious epic. "In the latter the fable and action are 'grave and solemn', the characters are eminent personages, with manner appropriate

to their high station, the sentiments are sublime, and the diction is elevated. In the former on the other hand, the fable and action are 'light and ridiculous', the characters are persons of inferior rank and consequently of inferior manners, while the sentiments and diction far from being lofty are ludicrous. The comic epic in short adopts the technique of the serious epic, but applies it to trivial and undignified subject matter."

Secondly, "*the comic epic differs from comedy*—as indeed the serious epic differs from tragedy—in that its action is more extended and comprehensive, containing a much larger circle of incidents and introducing a greater variety of characters".

Thirdly, *the comic epic differs from writings of the burlesque kind.* For burlesque is ever the exhibition of what is monstrous and unnatural, and where our delight, if we examine it, arises from the surprising absurdity, where as the comic is strictly confined to the just imitation of 'nature' which to an accurate observer is sufficiently ridiculous, while, however, in the comic epic, the characters and sentiments must always be perfectly natural, a certain burlesque drollery in style is occasionally permissible in the narrative or descriptive parts. Thus in *Joseph Andrews* though the characters and sentiments are according to nature, some of the descriptions are composed in a mock heroic style, in ludicrous imitation of the classics. The mock heroic account of the battle with the hounds, the burlesque descriptions of morning and evening, the comparison of the amorous Slipslop with a hungry tigress or a vociferous pike and the apostrophe in the 'sublime style' to 'Love and Vanity' in *Joseph Andrews* are examples of such burlesque descriptions. But, of course, some burlesque in description, where everything else is strictly natural, does not make the whole piece a burlesque, any more than some pomp in description, where everything is low and mean, makes the whole piece sublime.

Fourthly, *the comic epic differs from purely fanciful and imaginative compositions,* such as the voluminous French heroic romances. "These romances without any assistance from nature or history described persons who never had existed or could exist and events which never had happened or could happen, their own brains being the chaos whence all their materials were selected. In contrast with such fantastic

inventions, the comic epic as has been said, presents an imitation of nature, reproducing as nearly as possible the world of real people and actual things. So Fielding claims that in his novels, everything is copied from the book of nature and scarce a character or action produced which I have not taken from my own observations and experiences." (Preface to *Joseph Andrews*) He would not like that anything should "appear unnatural in this our history." To distinguish his essentially veracious epic from monstrous works of unrestrained imagination, he preferred to call it a 'history' rather than a novel or a romance. Fielding did not indeed draw a rigid distinction between the general terms epic and romance. On the contrary he equated them in his preface, where he observed that "a comic romance is a comic epic poem in prose." As for the term 'novel', Fielding was apt to use it in a depreciatory sense : "a swarm of foolish novels and monstrous romances." (*Tom Jones* IX Book, i ch.)

Fifthly, ***Fielding's epic though designed a history differs from histories*** commonly so called (*e.g.*, Histories of England, France, etc.) The latter furnish accounts of particular places, periods and peoples, the former presents a picture of the world in general, at least that part which is polished by laws, arts and sciences ; and of that from the time it was first polished to this day, nay, and forwards as long as it shall so remain. In other words the latter describes temporal and local phases of human life which in all civilized ages and places are the same. Details of time and place, and circumstances on which the historian lays stress, the epic writer regards as of trivial importance and sometimes mistakes. But the epic writer reveals, as the ordinary historian does not the basic truths of human nature no matter when or where, or under what conditions it exists, had existed or will exist." (Dudden)

Thus differentiated from serious epic, from comedy, from burlesque, from fanciful romance, and from ordinarry history, the comic prose epic is declared to be a new species in English Literature. "This kind of writing", said Fielding, "I do not remember to have seen hitherto attempted in our language." (Preface to *Joseph Andrews*). He furnished, therefore two splendid examples of it in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*.

It must, however, be added that as Fielding believed like Richardson in the didactic function of fiction, the comic epic is designed to furnish instruction as well as entertainment.'' The exposure of human frailty and folly is 'calculated for much more general and noble purposes' than mere diversion. Its object is rather "to hold the glass to thousands in their closets, that they may contemplate their deformity, and endeavour to reduce it, and thus by suffering private mortification may avoid public shame." (*Joseph Andrews*, Preface)

XII

FIELDING'S THEORY OF THE RIDICULOUS

In the Preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding gave his theory of the ridiculous. Dudden has given a very exhaustive analysis of this theory in his book on Fielding. "The serious epic is concerned with the sublime, the comic prose epic is concerned with ludicrous. But this immediately raises the question. What exactly is meant by the term ridiculous? To what qualities, actions or characters may the world be properly applied. Several writers, it is true, had handled or at any rate touched at this topic—Aristotle, Shaftesbury, and Lord Chesterfield. But though some had thrown out valuable suggestions, none has explained positively what the ridiculous is or traced to its fountain. Fielding therefore thought it necessary, in the Preface to his *Joseph Andrews*, to state his own theory.

(1) "To clear the ground he briefly specifies what is not ridiculous. First in agreement with Aristotle, he excludes great crimes and vices from the provinces of the ridiculous; for these ought to be regarded not with amusement but with abhorrence. He admits, indeed that he has introduced vices and of a very black kind into his novels. In excuse, however, he pleads "that it is very different to pursue a series of human actions, and keep clear of them", and that the vices which are thus almost inevitably introduced are never set forth as in themselves

subjects of ridicule, but always as objects of detestation. Secondly, he excludes sterling goodness from ridicule for this should be regarded only with love and admiration. Thirdly, he excludes from ridicule the miseries and misfortunes of life, whether they take the shape of some natural imperfection (such as ugliness, deformity, mental imbecility) or of some wretched condition (such as extreme poverty); great distress should be regarded not with pity. He allows, however, that misery may become ridiculous, if it be combined with affectation—if for example an uglyman lays himself out to be admired for beauty, or a fool poses as a wit, or a pauper endeavours to pass himself off as a wealthy person. While misery in itself should excite only tender compassion, misery masquerading under some fantastical appearance need not be treated with indulgence.

(2) Having considered what is not ridiculous, Fielding next proceeds to the consideration of what is so. At the time, when he wrote, there was a tendency to connect the ridiculous with affectation. The Abbe Bellegarde had been inclined to take this line. "Affectation", he had written, "is the falsification of the whole person, which deviates from all that is natural. whereby it might please to put on an ascititious air, where withal to become ridiculous." (Bellegarde : *Reflections upon Ridicule*). Chesterfield again had approved and elaborated an observation of La Rochefoucauld, that "people are never ridiculous from their real, but from their affected characters." (*Commonsense*). Fielding, evidently, was acquainted with Chesterfield's essay on this subject and did not hesitate to adopt theory therein proponded. "The only source of true ridiculous", he declares, "is affectation". Affectatation he further maintains, though not quite universal is extremely common. The majority of mankind are always struggling to appear what in reality they are not; they disguise themselves with masks instead of showing their natural faces, like actors they are constantly engaged in personating characters other than their own. (Preface to *Joseph Andrews* and Essay on the knowledge of Human Nature). This common habit affords great opportunities for the humorist. Since life is pervaded by affectation, and since affectation is ridiculous, it follows that life everywhere furnishes an accurate observer with the ridiculous.

"But Fielding is not content with observing the source of the

ridiculous in affectation. He proceeds further to enquire : what are the sources from which affectation springs? He believes that there are two—(1) Vanity and (2) hypocrisy—which ought to be distinguished carefully. Vanity instigates men to affect to be something more than they really are, in order to win applause ; hypocrisy incites them to affect to be something quite the reverse of what they are, in order to avoid censure. Vanity, for instance, causes a man who is virtuous in some insignificant degree to pose as greatly virtuous ; hypocrisy causes a man who is not only not virtuous but also positively vicious pose as virtuous. The affectation which springs from vanity is thus nearer truth than that which proceeds from hypocrisy, since it is in line with and not, like the other, definitely repugnant to the man's true nature. The former is merely an exaggeration of truth, while the latter is a direct opposition to truth ; the former is merely ostentation, while the latter is rank imposture.

It is the revelation of affectation that produces the ridiculous. The business of the humorist is simply to unmask the affected character—to show that the vain man is somewhat deficient in the qualities with which he expires to be credited, and that the hypocrite is in fact the very opposite of what he wishes to be thought. Such exposure strikes the onlooker with surprise, and excites his mirth, and that in a higher degree in proportion as the exposure is more startling, as in the case of the detected hypocrite (*e.g.*, Blifil). "I might observe", writes Fielding, "that our Ben Jonson, who of all men understood the ridiculous the best, hath chiefly used the hypocritical affectation." (Dudden)

In the criticism of this theory it can be said that it is sound as far as it goes, but, however, it is not sufficiently comprehensive. It is true that affectation is a source of the ridiculous, it is not true that affectation is the only source." The ridiculous is sometimes found where no affectation, as vanity or hypocrisy, is discoverable. Fielding himself came to recognize that his formula was inadequate.

XIII

FIELDING'S PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH NOVEL

Richardson was the founder of the modern novel in England. Earlier still, it is true, there were romances, allegories, character sketches, narratives of adventure, chronicles of scandal, and fictions of various kinds, but none of these not even the admirable stories of Defoe were exactly novels as we understand the term today. It was Richardson who when he was writing on his *Familiar Letters*—invented the genre. *Pamela* is thus the first example of the modern English novel.

However, if the title of the founder of the species does not go to Fielding, "he was at any rate the first to furnish an authoritative exhibition of the essential features of successful novel work. These may be enumerated as follows : (1) organised structure, (2) convincing realism of description and characterization, (3) a brisk course of action leading to an appropriate conclusion, (4) natural dialogue, (5) sex interest, and (6) informative criticism of life. When he embodied these essentials in his novels, Fielding established once for all the characteristic form of the novel. As Francis Coventry has truly said, "he was the great law-giver", who laid down for subsequent novelists the canons which were to regulate the practice of their craft.

The form of the novel, which Fielding wrought out and instituted as a standard was not a rigid and inelastic thing. "It was capable of expansion and development, and it actually has been expanded and developed in many directions since his time. We have the sentimental novel ; the novel of mystery and terror, the historical novel, the psychological novel, the political novel, the doctrinaire novel, the humanitarian novel and others. And it is easy to see that all the varieties of fiction during the last two hundred years are but outgrowths and expatiations of the original novel-form which Fielding established. And for this reason Fielding's importance in the history of the novel is unique. No British novelist—not anyone of those eighteenth century masters, Richardson, Smollett, and Sterne—not even

Walter Scott, has exercised directly or indirectly so potent an influence on generations of fiction writers, or has been ultimately responsible for such various and remarkable literary effects. For indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that every example of this species of writing that is in circulation today has been ultimately derived from and potentially existed in, those monumental Fielding works which are perhaps the most suggestive and originative productions in English literature." (Dudden). They are the production of a man, whose grasp of human nature was extraordinary and whom later English novelists could not surpass.

Thus seeing these achievements of Fielding, we do not have any apter description of Fielding than the oft-quoted one of Scott—"The celebrated Henry Fielding, Father of the English Novel."

XIV

FIELDING'S INFLUENCE ON LATER ENGLISH NOVELISTS

'Fielding exercises the greatest influence on English novelists. Some of the novelists were directly, consciously and confessedly inspired by Fielding'. There are others who, although they did not make any acknowledgement of the fact, show obvious signs of having been influenced by him in their work. "Others, again, in certain particulars strikingly resembled Fielding, though they cannot be reckoned among his imitators." Dudden has dealt with this in his book in detail.

Goldsmith

Goldsmith, though in *The Bee* (No. V) he alluded disparagingly to *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, and perhaps also glanced at Fielding in his attack on 'dangerous fictions where love is the ruling passion in his *Citizen of the World* (Letter 83), seems nevertheless to have taken hints from the works of his

great predecessor for his *Vicar of Wakefield* (1766). It is evident that in this story he made some use of *Joseph Andrews*, though not to the extent of downright 'plagiarism', as Hazlitt thought. At any rate there can be no doubt that the figure of Dr. Primrose, so delightfully simple and so genuinely good, if partly based on the author's father, was also partly modelled on Parson Adams. The light irony, the benevolent humour, and the Stoic-Christian morality of the book remind us of Fielding and suggest that Goldsmith had profited by his reading of the master. In one place in the novel there is a sportive allusion to *Tom Jones*—where we are told that Olivia Primrose had acquired some of her skill in controversy by perusing 'the disputes between Thwackum and Square'.

Richard Graves

"A much closer follower of Fielding was Richard Graves, author of the amusing anti-Methodist romance *The Spiritual Quixote*, or *The Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffrey Wildgoose* (1772). Though in his prefatory 'Apology' the author pays a fine compliment to Richardson and ignores Fielding, yet, his book is throughout true of Fielding-like quality. In this 'epopoea' (so the history is called) we find the sparkling narrative of adventure on the open road, with its rich variety of characters and incidents ; the vivid pictures of English life and manners ; the inset stories and occasional essays ; the ironical humour, sometimes vented in ridiculous burlesque, and the prose at once scholarly and familiar, well sprinked with literary allusions yet easy and pleasant to peruse—in short the very features which distinguish *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. We note also the precise localising of the events of the journey, the satiric handling of Medhodism and 'enthusiasm', and the use of the name 'Mrs. Booby.' If Graves consciously imitated any writer besides Cervantes, that writer was undoubtedly Fielding. One direct allusion to *Tom Jones* is interesting. When Wildgoose and Jerry Tugwell arrived at Gloucester, they sought lodging at the 'Bell' inn ; but they were repulsed by the landlady, Mrs. Whitefield, whose 'usual politeness to strangers' forsook her on the sight of two such dusty travellers. 'Heyday', cried she, 'lodgings indeed ! yes, to be sure, because Squire Fielding, forsooth, in that romancing book of his, pretends that

Tom Jones, was harboured here, we shall be pestered with all the trampers that pass the road.'

Francis Burney

"Not a little of Fielding may be detected in *Evelina* (1778) of Francis Burney. In the preface to her work the young authoress declared herself 'softened by the pathetic powers of Richardson, and exhilarated by the wit of Fielding.' But though she admired Richardson, and in *Evelina* adopted the Richardsonian epistolary form, it was from Fielding that she drew inspiration for her best passages. Her talent was not for psychological analysis, but for realism and satire. In her lovely reproduction of the contemporary social scene, in her graphic portrayal of characters marked by distinctive idiosyncrasies and revealing themselves in natural dialogue, and in her ironically humorous description of manners, she shows herself unmistakably a pupil of Fielding. The resemblance between the two authors was indeed noted at the time. Dr. Burney considered his daughter's performance 'to be the best novel I know, excepting Fielding's' ; and Johnson with high uncritical partiality, affirmed that *Evelina* was positively superior to Fielding's works. But Miss Burney was a woman, and though, not exactly prime, certainly a conventional woman ; and her picture of human life was far less comprehensive than that of the author of *Tom Jones*. Fielding exhibited life in all its aspects, ugly as well as beautiful, evil as well as good ; Miss Burney shrank from handling subjects unsuitable for presentation by a genteel young lady. And apart from this limitation of range, she was vastly inferior to Fielding alike in plot-construction, in characterization—many of her characters as Macaulay pointed out, being simply 'humours', in which some peculiarity is extravagantly over-charged—in critical acumen and in style. Yet her following of Fielding is manifest. She was, in fact, 'the first writer to translate the Fielding type of novel into the feminine key.'

Richard Cumberland

"An avowed imitator of Fielding was Richard Cumberland, who in his novel *Henry* (1795) produced rather a laboured replica of the Fielding 'comic epic in prose', with some adjustments to suit the changed manners of the last years of the

century. The story which is divided into twelve books, is carefully constructed, and prolegomenous chapters—containing a good deal of interesting matter, particularly on the subject of fiction are regularly introduced. Certain of the characters were unquestionably suggested by those in *Joseph Andrews*. Scott considred *Henry* an 'excellent novel'; wherein might be found 'much beauty of description, and considerable display of acquaintance with English life in the lower ranks'; but it is not chiefly as the best of the direct imitations of Fielding that it claims the attention of the modern reader.

Jane Austen

"To call Jane Austen (whose novels were published in 1811-1818) a feminine counterpart of Fielding would certainly be unwarranted. The two authors differ conspicuously in many respects. Miss Austen dealt—with admirable competence, it is true—with a mere fragment of human experience; Fielding dealt with little less than the whole range of normal life. Jane Austen cultivated artistic detachment and impersonality; whereas Fielding neglected no opportunity of obtruding himself and his opinions into his stories. Jane Austen, engrossed by the study of character, cared little for incidents, at any rate for those of an extraordinary and exciting kind; Fielding, though equally a student of character, delighted in stirring and surprising adventures Jane Austen's humour is delicate, arch, demure; Fielding's humour is full-blooded and emphatic. These and other differences are obvious enough. Yet the two writers also exhibit similarities, which may be evidence—though there is no proof of any such thing—that the later was not entirely uninfluenced by the earlier. At any rate the resemblances are striking. In her penetrating observation and realistic presentation of the 'daily round, the common task' of the ordinary, humdrum life of mankind; in her talent for portraying characters, which however commonplace they may be, are perfectly discriminated and individualized, and intensely vital and real; in her steady concentration on normal human nature, without ever an attempt to investigate the abnormal potentialities—the mysterious heights and depths—of the human soul; in her studious avoidance of emotionalism, sentimentalism, enthusiasm, and vehement passion; in her ever present ironical bias, and in the

perfection of her constructive technique, whereby almost everything, however seemingly trivial, is made in some way contributory to the final issue—in all these points Jane Austen is akin to Fielding. Her work, though executed (as she herself said) on the miniature scale and with the finest brush, was essentially, like his, a humorous unmasking of affectation.

4- Unnatural way of behaving

Sir Walter Scott

"It appears that Scott were fully appreciated the greatness and of Fielding. He underestimated the nobility of his personal character, rashly crediting the misleading representations of Watson Murphy. He also underestimated his quality as an artist. With the exception of *Tom Jones*, to which he accorded the highest praise, he reckoned Fielding's novels inferior to those of Smollett, pronounced *Amelia* on the whole unpleasing, and could make nothing of *Jonathan Wild*. Being himself no deep thinker, he set too little value on that penetrating criticism of life in which Fielding excelled. Nevertheless he undoubtedly cherished a sincere admiration of his great predecessor. He made acquaintance with his works when he was a lad of thirteen, and there is evidence that he had them pretty constantly in his mind from the time of *Waverley* until his death. He acclaimed Fielding as 'Father of the English Novel'. He extolled and envied his incomparable skill in plot-shaping. He eulogized his 'forcible, yet natural exhibition of character, unapproached as yet even by his successful followers'; his 'entertaining critical introductions,' his 'elegance of composition and expression', and his grave irony similar to that of Cervantes and Swift. And he stoutly defended his work against the charge of immorality.

"The points of difference between these two writers are too obvious to need explaining. But it may be worthwhile to mention—without making any suggestion of deliberate imitation—certain points of similarity. First, though his genius was romantic with a strong historical bias, Scott was capable of furnishing as accurate transcripts of real life as are to be found in the works of Fielding, or any other professed realist, while many of his heroes and heroines are mere pasteboard figures, his pictures of humble folk—Scottish peasants and people of the soil—as well as of queer or uncanny characters are drawn with a

realism that can hardly be surpassed. Again Scott possessed in an eminent degree the Fielding like power of revealing, underneath all local and temporal forms, the unchanging substance of human nature—the elemental human stuff, *quod semper et ubique et ab omnibus*. His novel like Fielding's, is a human epic. Both the writers, moreover, were lawyers, with a habit of introducing legal problems and technicalities in their works ; and both showed a marked predilection for a happy ending, with a just distribution of rewards and punishments. Finally, though neither Fielding nor Scott was strictly the creator of the literary form in which each excelled—the realistic novel in the one case, the historical romance in the other—yet each was the first authoritative exponent of his particular form, affording the classical model thereof, and exerting a far-reaching influence, not only on a succession of disciples and imitators, but also on numbers of fiction-writers whose work differed widely from his in aim and scope and type.

Thomas Love Peacock

"That very unusual novelist Thomas Love Peacock (whose novels, if novels they can properly be called, were published 1816-31, with *Gryll Grange* in 1860), was an admirer of Fielding. to whose wisdom he paid a tribute, and whom he classed with such literary giants as Cervantes, Rebelais, Swift and Voltaire. Peacock was too original to be imitator ; yet in certain respects he reminds us of Fielding. He was essentially a satirist ; and his satire, Lucianic in quality, playing lightly on all manner of contemporary cults and cants and crazes, is of much the same brand as that employed by Fielding to ridicule the affectations and absurdities of his time. He was also a stylist, and his style, saturated with the classics but not in the least pedantic, abounding in piquant expressions and phrases, that present an appearance of having been thrown oft extempore, approximates in some measure to that of the older master. In his novels, moreover, as in Fielding's, shrewd wit and sarcastic humour are excercised in the service of reason and good sense. Peacock, no less than Fielding, was fond of depicting passions ; and his most successful clerical character, the 'learned and jolly' Dr. Folliott in *Crotchet Castle*, is a

particularly Fielding like creation. Those queer personages, too, who assemble for lively debate on the topics of the hour in Peacock's country houses, recall the eccentric disputants Thwackum and Square, whose heated arguments afford diversion to the readers of *Tom Jones*.

Charles Dickens

"A much nearer approach to Fielding may be detected in the novels of Charles Dickens (published 1836-70). Though not primarily imitative Dickens owed a great deal to earlier writers. In the broad comedy of his farcical situations, in the strongly accentuated portrayal of eccentric characters, and in his detailed description of 'settings', he showed himself a disciple of Smollett. His pathos, so far as it had a literary source, was derived from Sterne. To the humorists Theodore Hook and Pierce Egan he was indebted for some considerable borrowings and it can not be doubted that Fielding also definitely influenced his work. According to George Barnett Smith (who knew the Victorian novelist personally) Fielding's 'power over Dickens was unquestionably immense.'

"It is evident that Dickens was familiar with the works of him whom he did not hesitate to describe as 'one of the greatest English writers'. As a small boy he used to play at impersonating 'Tom Jones (a child's Tom Jones, a harmless creature) for a work together'. In later life he made several allusions to Fielding both direct and indirect. Thus in *Pickwick*, he observed that 'Fielding tells us that man is fire and woman too, and the prince of Darkness sets a light to them'; and in the first sentence of the second chapter (that punctual servant of all work, the sun') he obviously copied Fielding's mock heroic manner. In the Preface to the third (1841) edition of *Oliver Twist*, defending his book against the imputation of 'lowness', he commenced with a quotation from Fielding, whose productions he classed 'in the noblest range of English literature', though they also had been reproached with 'lowness' by the critics ; and in the preface to the first 'cheap edition' of the same book he remarked that 'when Fielding described Newgate, the prison immediately ceased to exist'. *Martin Chuzzlewit* opens with a chapter which was without doubt inspired by Fielding's account of the ancestry

of Jonathan Wild, and contains one character, the immortal Sairey Gamp, who reincarnates, with variations, the immortal Slipslop. In an address at Glasgow, in 1847, Dickens said, 'we never tire of the friendships we form with books...Sophia's muff will be seen and loved, by another than Tom Jones, going down the High Street some winter day'. For the inclusion of the 'History of a Self-Tormentor' in *Little Dorrit* he gave a reason which he conjectured might be substantially, Fielding's reason for the introduced story'; on which Forster observed that a 'happier hint of apology' for Fielding's interpolated narrations, such as that of the Man of the Hill, 'could hardly be given'. Again the 'beautiful' passage in the *Journey from this World to the Next*, describing a father's meeting with his little daughter in the Elysian Fields, made a deep impression on Dickens and is referred to admiringly in his correspondence.

"Such scattered allusions, however, are no true measure of the extent of Fielding's influence on this nineteenth century novelist. That influence was far stronger than most critics have imagined. Nor is the fact surprising; for in spirit and temperament the two authors were in many respects congenial. Both, though poignantly aware of the evil in the world, nevertheless believed firmly in the fundamental goodness of human nature; both preached up charity, kindness, cheerful and warm hearted benevolence, as the supreme virtue, and were inclined to look askance on the austerer forms of righteousness; both though one was an aristocrat and the other a man of the people—were strongly democratic in their sympathies; both were primarily interested in the world of Human Nature, and comparatively indifferent to the marvellous phenomena of the world of Nature; both loved children and both abominated hypocrites.

"In their novel work we observe certain striking similarities, though even some of the similarities are combined with striking differences. Both were supreme humorists; but Dickens's humour tended to be extravagant and farcical. Both were realists; but while Fielding realistically pictured the actual world, Dickens pictured realistically a non existent, fancy world—a world like nothing on world, but which is presented with such strict realism of detail as to become almost believable. Both were creators of unforgettable

characters ; but while Fielding's characters are such as might actually have been encountered in everyday life Dickens's characters, with their distinguishing mannerisms are half-real, half-unreal figures, never to be found in the world of reality, but harmonizing perfectly with that half real, half-unreal world which Dickens imagins them to inhabit. Both possessed power of pathos ; but while Fielding's pathos is austerely reserved, Dickens's pathos is too frequently overwrought. It may be added that both writers satirized contemporary abuses and earnestly strove to awaken the public to the need of reform, without, however, advocating (at any rate in their novels) specific means or methods of effecting the reform desired ; both delighted in the scenes and humours of the roads—of the country high-ways, in Fielding's case, of the London streets in the case of Dickens ; and both introduced a considerable amount of autobiography and personal reminiscence into their fiction.

"Finally the influence of Fielding on Dickens seems to be suggested by the fact that the latter, as a token of very special respect and esteem, bestowed the name Henry Fielding on one of his sons.

W. M. Thackeray

"But the chief disciple of Fielding—indeed the only modern writer who was consciously and completely his disciple—is William Makepeace Thackeray (whose novels were produced 1839-64). In his *Times* review (2 September, 1840) and in his 'Humorist' lecture at Willis's Rooms (26 June 1851), Thackeray gave the world two memorable appreciations of his brave old master'. He portrayed him both as a man and as an artist. The portrait of the man—featuring a reckless prodigal, goodnatured and generous, but lax in his morals and low in his tastes—is a brilliantly clever but very untrue piece of work, a mere imaginative elaboration of unauthenticated tradition. The portrait of the artist is of infinitely finer quality. With golden eloquence, Thackeray paid a just and discerning tribute to that mighty craftsman of the novel, whose veracious realism, superb characterisation, and masterly plot-construction filled him with wonder and admiration. Of Fielding the man he was the condescending apologist : but of Fielding the artist

he was the reverential copyist. It is true that in his work we observe an infusion of elements taken from other sources—sentimentalism drawn from Sterne, romantic historical settings derived from Scott, occasional instances of extravagance inspired by Theodore Hook, but Fielding is above all the teacher at whose feet he sat as pupil, and in his Preface to *Pendennis* he made what was virtually a public acknowledgement of the relationship. Not without reason has he been called a 'Second Fielding'.

"Thackeray pursued that 'truth to Nature' which Fielding regarded as the important thing in fiction. A writer in *the North British Review* in 1855 acclaimed these two authors as 'the two greatest painters of human nature, as it actually is, that we have ever had, Shakespeare alone excepted'. Thackeray's novel is, in fact, the realist novel, fashioned on Fielding's lines. He described what he saw faithfully and accurately. But his range of vision was more limited than that of his predecessor. Fielding observed and depicted—if one may use a phrase of Lowell—'life in its broadest sense', Thackeray observed and depicted (not merely in one but in all of his books) the life of Vanity Fair. And, even in describing this Vanity Fair life, he tended to concentrate his attention on particular kinds of character, particular kinds of situation which with necessary variations, are again and again reintroduced. Moreover, in his presentation of this life, he considered himself obliged to practise reserve. Fielding exhibited humanity in the nude, displaying everything, concealing nothing; Thackeray decently draped his figures in difference to Victorian squeamishness, which would not tolerate a completely frank delineation of natural man.

"Thackeray's satire, like that of Fielding, was directed against shames and affectations. His aim as a novelist was to expose all manner of vanities and hypocrisies—social pretences, sentimental insincerities, moral formalities, literary artificialities. He had a penetrating insight into every species of humbug, and a masterly skill in bringing it to light. The instrument which he employed for the purpose of showing up affectations was ironical banter. Irony pervaded all his work, just as it pervaded the work of Fielding. His *Barry Lyndon* was modelled on the greater *Jonathan Wild*.

"Like Fielding, Thackeray was a master of both humour and pathos. He was quick to observe the ridiculous aspects of human life, he knew men's follies, and laughed at them—not, as a rule, unkindly, but with the tolerance and comprehension of an experienced men of the world, disillusioned indeed but not embittered. Only occasionally when he found human nature not merely w·ak but also wicked, did his ridicule become savage. And as he appreciated the ludicrous in life, so—perhaps yet more intensely—he appreciated the pathetic. No one better understood the realness of man's pitiful existence. But in his treatment of the pathetic his manner varied. In many passages his pathos is the pure, restrained pathos of Fielding in some others it is more akin to the lacrymose pathos of Sterne.

"Like Fielding, again, Thackeray refused to efface himself in his fiction. He had the habit of intruding in *propria persona* into his stories—explaining his characters, commenting on their actions, and moralizing at large on any-topic suggested by the narrative. As he confessed, he was 'addicted to preaching' and he used the novel as a pulpit, from which he could deliver, as often as he saw fit, his criticism of life. He was not, indeed, a very profound thinker ; but he had the art of being perpetually interesting. Even through the more commonplace of his moralising passages, he holds the attention of the reader.

"Thackeray's style - easy, flowing, lucid, scholarly, rather resembling first rate talk—reminds us of Fielding's. But it is excessively diffuse. Thackeray took a full paragraph to express what Fielding would have said in a single sentence. He lacked a sense of what to omit. In the construction of his stories he was markedly inferior to Fielding. He vastly admired the novel architecture of the latter ; but (except in *Esmond*, and perhaps *Vanity Fair*) he was himself too lazy to imitate it. He allowed himself to meander, to digress, to intruduce superfluous and extraneous matter, and would not take trouble to keep severely to the main lines of his plots.

Bulwer Lytton

"Thackeray's contemporary, that singularly versatile writer Bulwer Lytton, who, between 1827 and 1873, produced so

many different species of novels, cannot properly be classed among the imitators of Fielding. But he certainly esteemed him, and was under some obligation to him (as, indeed, he was also to Sterne, and Scott and others). He regarded him as an 'illustrious' exponent of what he styled 'the narrative form of romance, affording a model to all who should assay this kind of fiction. He was immensely impressed by his constructive technique, and in one of his letters declared *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and *Tom Jones* to be the 'three master-pieces of narrative which can never be too much studied'. He also praised, though with some reserve, 'the flesh-and-blood vitality of Fielding's characterisation. He proclaimed *Tom Jones* 'our greatest and most popular novel', and *Jonathan Wild* 'the finest prose-satire in the English language'. And—what is specially interesting—he strongly asserted 'the high moral purpose' of this much maligned author, whom he described as 'a more deep, accurate and scientific moralist than is generally supposed...a far more profound and noble moralist than Addison'. 'The perception of moral truths', he wrote, 'urged him to the composition of his fictions... His master-pieces are the results of his intense convictions'. He believed also that these masterpieces were not only intended to produce, but actually did produce, very salutary moral effects. For it is, perhaps, less from 'the portraiture of gigantic crime' than from instances of 'familiar fault and commonplace error' such as 'the popular infirmities of *Tom Jones* or the everyday hypocrisy of Blifil', that men take warning.

George Eliot

Of George Eliot, or Mary Ann Evans (whose fiction was published 1858-76) not much need here be said. But we cannot pass over the famous passage in *Middle March*, wherein she characterised Fielding as a 'great historian' who has his place among 'the colossi' of literature, and particularly eulogised his initial chapters and other digressions, 'where he seems to...chat with us in all the lusty case of his fine English' And it seems likely that she was attracted, and to some extent influenced, by a good deal more in Fielding than the initial essays. Paul Stapfer, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, affirmed that she had read Fielding's novels with profit ; and another French critic, F. Brunetiere, coupled Fielding and

George Eliot as joint exponents of that sympathetic realism which strikingly contrasted with the harsh scientific realism of the French naturalists. Certainly in the novels and stories of her earlier period (*i.e.*, those published before *Romola* in 1863) we find features which remind us of Fielding—a Fielding-like interest in middle class provincial life; a Fielding-like habit of utilizing autobiographical materials; personal reminiscences of people and incidents, in her fiction; a Fielding-like capacity for exhibiting, with controlled simplicity, the pathos inherent in pathetic situations; and a Fielding-like all-pervading sanity and commonsense. Also, of course, her general idea of the novel as a vehicle of moral instruction—in her own case a vehicle for the inculcation of the stern doctrine of the act and its inevitable consequences for good or ill—may be traced back ultimately to Richardson and Fielding. Yet we do not discover in her writings direct imitations of Fielding in matters of detail. Only suggestions of her familiarity with the works of the earlier novelist occasionally occur. In her delineation for example, of the character of 'beautiful, patient,' Milly Barton in *Scenes from Clerical Life*, George Eliot must surely have had Fielding's Amelia in mind.

George Meredith

"Only one other writer need be mentioned. George Meredith (whose novels were published 1859-95) strikes us at first sight as thoroughly unlike Fielding. He was a poet, a master of melody and passion. He was a super, subtle psychologist. He was an imaginative philosopher, who expressed his thought in a uniquely involved and allusive manner—never plainly and straight-forwardly, but in metaphors, analogies, hinted comparisons, and illustrations. And he was a whimsical phrase artificer, deliberately cultivating 'a fantastic delivery of the verities'. He did not believe in that realistic type of story that aims at an actual transcription of life and manners; he valued and used the story only as an instrument for the exemplification of ideas. In all these points he was very far removed from Fielding. Nevertheless in certain respects the two authors were spiritually akin. And this kinship was acknowledged by Meredith himself in a well known passage in his lecture on "*The Idea of Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit* (1877). 'O for

a breath of Aristophams. Rabelais, Voltaire, Cervantes, Fielding, Moliere', he cried, 'There are spirits that, if you know them well, will come when you do call. You will find the very invocation of them act on you like renovating air—the South-West coming off the sea, or a cry in the Alps'. To illustrate his theory of comedy Meredith drew on Fielding's writings ; and in the formulation of the theory itself he undoubtedly took account of the purpose and practice of the inventor of the comic prose epic. According to his own conception, the comic spirit 'is the genius of thoughtful laughter', that observes and criticises—not cynically, harshly or contemptuously, but seriously, sympathetically, and with 'unrivalled politeness'—the vanities, hypocrisies, pedantries, inconscistencies, and silly affectations of society, with a definitely corrective intention. Its aim is first to make people laugh at their own follies and thus get rid of them ; and then to make them laugh gently and indulgently, without anger or impatience, at the foibles of others, and thus assist them also to achieve a cure. Always its purpose is purgative and remedial. With its 'volleys of silvery-laughter' it clears away all manner of errors, and restores the age to sanity. In all this we are reminded of Fielding's serious use of ridicule to laugh men out of their vices and follies. But Meredith's idea of comedy was too exclusively intellectual, too specialized and narrow in its range. Fielding's conception certainly included that critical and corrective laughter which Meredith described, but it also included much more.

"Other resembalnces between two authors may be noted. Both present a combination ; rare in literature, of high intelligence, and cheerful optimism. It is true that Fielding in his later days became in some measure disheartened ; but he never quite lost his early faith in the basic soundness of human nature and its grand potentiality of development in the future. This was likewise the faith of Meredith. 'Who can really think', he wrote, 'and not think hopefully' ? Both writers, again, were peculiarly emphatic in denunciation of egoism and selfish individualism, and in laudation of the altruistic virtues—charity, kindness, beneficence, generous service ; yet valued those virtues only in so far as they represented the natural and spontaneous outflowings of genuine goodness of heart. A calculated affectation of philanthropy and the frothy gust of mere sentimentalism

were to both alike abhorrent. Both writers, once more, had a remarkable power of exposing the general types underlying the individual characters in their fictions : and not merely the types, but also, underlying these, the essential, eternal, universal truths of human personality. Said Meredith of his Sir Willoughby Patterns "He is all of us". Both writers excelled in depicting most delightful and most convincingly real heroines—healthy, brave, fine spirited, clear-sighted creatures, endowed with both character and charm-heroines whose qualities decisively reputed the popular notion (universally prevalent in Fielding's day, and still common in the time of Meredith) of woman's inferiority to man. Meredith's heroines are more intellectually accomplished than Fielding's, but by no means excel them in other respects. Finally, both Fielding and Meredith intended that their novels should furnish instruction as well as entertainment, and both cultivated the habit of introducing into their narratives their own observations and comments on life. Such similarities are significant. Meredith, strikingly, original though he was, was not uninfluenced by earlier writers. We discover in his novels something of Richardson, something of Sterne, something of Peacock, something of Carlyle. And assuredly, it is no mere idle fancy to detect incorporated therein something—perhaps even a good deal—of Fielding also."

All this shows the tremendous influence of Fielding on English novelists.

TOM JONES

I

OUTLINE OF THE PLOT OF *TOM JONES*

Tom Jones, a young fellow of good disposition and a full allowance of natural appetites, is the adopted son of a great squire, the rich Mr. Allworthy, a man of almost superhuman virtues, who might stand in a didactic story for justice and benevolence incarnate, or the divinity whose business is to see everything righted in mundane affairs. Tom is what, for lack of a mere sensible term, is called the hero, although his role is remarkably passive. The villain is Blifil. Blifil, Squire Allworthy's nephew and legitimate heir, is the orphan son of Allworthy's sister, Bridget, a spinster, courted and won, when she was "somewhat passed the age of thirty", by a fortune hunting Captain Blifil, who died. Blifil and Tom, brought up together, stand in precise antithesis to each other. Jones has an open, honest, kindly disposition, which circumstances and evil communications can never entirely mar; Blifil is one of those who would have no personality at all were not a sort of imitation character provided by self-interest and convention. Selfish in a mean, servile way he learns piety and good behaviour by rate, and affects love and admiration for Allworthy, on whose opinion his fortunes depend, without a grain of sympathy or even comprehension for the virtues he defers to.

"Tom and Master Blifil are much of their time in company with Sophia Western, only daughter of the neighbouring squire, and she falls in love unawares with the debonair Tom, who is the soul of chivalry and has risked his life and limb more than once for her sake. Tom might have responded but his heart is elsewhere. He is entangled with a country-wench, Molly Seagrim, daughter of a poaching gamekeeper who had ruined himself by abetting Tom in one of his escapades. Tom finds later on that Moll was the reducer rather than the reduced; but having got her into trouble he stands to his bargain, and even resigns himself to the prospect of marrying her if need be. But, even when his conscience is cleared in

regard to Molly, and Sophia's obvious preference awakens an answering passion in himself, he will not wrong his benefactors by pursuing one so much above him. Fielding writes about him thus: "Mr Jones had somewhat about him, which, though I think writers are not thoroughly agreed in its name, doth certainly inhabit some human breasts; whose use is not so properly to distinguish right from wrong, as to prove and incite them to the former, and to restrain and withhold them from the latter...though he did not always act rightly, yet he never did otherwise without feeling and suffering for it". (Book: IV.6).

The two families it appears had other designs; and when Sophia's aunt, the redoubtable Miss Western, surprises the young lady's secret, a match between her and the odious Blifil, which had been vaguely contemplated as a means of uniting the two estates, is pressed forward, despite Sophia's stubborn resistance. Those critics who think that Fielding, all the while he was writing *Tom Jones*, had before his eye the main situation in Richardson's *Clarissa*, about which he is supposed to have known through his sister Sarah, find here the counterpart to Clarissa's position when she is being pushed by her family into arms of Mr. Solnus and hopes for deliverance by Lovelace, with whom she is half in love. The situations are parallel and in contrast. But all that is probable is that Fielding was perfectly aware of the complete opposition between his view of life, of conduct, of character, and Richardson's view, and without any particular rivalry, felt all the more assured that his own view was right and true. At any rate this coincidence in the plots of the two novelists, and the absolutely different way in which the characters work out their destinies, are a luminous illustration of the fundamental antagonism of the two men's genius.

"Tom quits the field. Traduced by Blifil, who, along with the time-serving Square and the spiteful Thwackum, had tutored the lads, maliciously misinterprets everything he has done or said, he is cast off by Allworthy; and caring little what becomes of himself, takes to the highway. He is all but penniless, for in the abandonment of despair he has carelessly lost the bill for five hundred pounds given him by Allworthy

at his dismissal. But Sophia, hearing that her lover has been turned out naked into the world, sends him all her ready money, and shortly after, to escape a forced marriage with Blifil, takes flight herself. Tom tramps aimlessly on, and, falling in with a troop of soldiers marching to join the forces against the Pretender, is easily induced to join them. But various incidents intervene. Tom comes across Partridge, the village schoolmaster, who had been suspected by Allworthy of being the lad's father and had been turned away. He has the fortune to rescue from robbery and assault a Mrs. Waters, who had been travelling with the soldiers and is supposed to be the captain's lady. This fair adventurers turns out in the sequel to be identical with Jenny Jones, who had been saddled with the guilt of bringing Tom into the world, and, like, Partridge, had been obliged to flee the neighbourhood. The present position of affairs, with these three thrown together, is ironical enough ; but the consequences, as yet unforeseen, are more poignantly ironical.

'The little partly make their way to Upton-on-Severn and install themselves at the best inn, where a series of ludicrous, surprising and poignant incidents begin with a furious battle, before the dishevelled Mrs. Waters can be safely established in her bedroom. This is indeed the crisis of the story. Before our travellers get away next day a runaway wife, Squire Western's niece, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, stops at the inn for rest and fresh horses, and is hardly gone before her husband arrives in hot pursuit. More momentous for Jones, Sophia with her maid, Mrs. Honour, on her way to London to seek refuge with her cousin Lady Bellaston, also reaches Upton in the dead of night, and learns that her lover is in the same house. But, alas for Tom ! That frail and ill-starred hero has succumbed to the attractions of Mrs. Waters, and the fact is discovered by Mrs. Honour and reported to Sophia. She can think of no fitter reproach than to leave in his empty bed a certain muff that he used to fondle, pinning her name to it on a piece of paper. She then sets out again for London. Her father is close behind. Hardly has Jones had time to digest his remorse and shame at the sight of the muff when this pursuer arrives and there is another scene. But the Squire does not overtake his daughter. A pack of hounds in full cry, a few miles further go on, is

enough to divert him from his quarry; he gallops after and is in at the death, and, meeting with a cordial invitation to stay with his fellow sportsman, gives up the chase.

"Fielding's first two volumes deal with country life, the next two with adventures on the road, the last two with town life. All three sections are full of incident. Even in the first part, which is the most epical, painting life and character in abroad and racy style, the narrative, going forward with a steady movement, breaks from time to time into lively dramatic scenes. The second part is much more dramatic; a swift succession of adventures in which the different threads are hurried across the loom for the final entanglement. In the third part the story reaches a complexity that seems to defy all hope of a fortunate solution; and then in the last chapters, by the time honoured device of revelation and recognition, an issue is triumphantly provided. Thus the tale which began with epical narration terminates in an exciting drama of intrigue. This is complicated and rich in surprises, but probability is never outraged. With deep laid cunning everything has been prepared far ahead. All is foreseen, nothing left to chance. One must read the story backwards, so to speak, to appreciate the beauty and precision of Fielding's plot, in which every character has an essential part to fulfil, and there is hardly an incident, no matter how insignificant, but contributes to the intended result. Little indeed is accidental, or could be omitted without detriment to the inner and outer symmetry.

"This last portion of the novel in which the soundness of the substructure is tested, is too intricate to be analysed in detail except at inordinate length. Let us note some of the critical points. Tom and Sophia are now in London. He is near the end of his money and in a state of desperation. She is safe for the moment in the house of her cousin, Lady Bellaston, who presently, however, hatches a scheme to match the heiress to a man of her own dissipated world, Lord Fellamar. Tom knows nothing of this; but, having by chance become possessed of a pocketbook belonging to Sophia and containing a hundred pound note he tries to find her out. But his luck is still against him. With "never less inclination to an amour" he becomes involved, by his "gallantry to the ladies", in an

affair with Lady Bellaston, and receiving a present from this dangerous person, finds himself in a ticklish position. Going to her house one night to an appointment, he is met, not by her, but by Sophia. They are interrupted by Lady Bellaston,and the ensuring scenes are comedy of the finest order. To free himself from the clutches of the demerit, Jones writes her a letter, formally offering marriage, which he is certain will secure a contemptuous refusal and his dismissal. But he reckons without his host, for the incriminating letter is afterwards produced as evidence of his treachery to Sophia. To get rid of this rival Lady Bellaston advises Fellamar to have Jones seized by a press-gang. All the critical moment, Jones is attacked by the jealous husband of Mrs. Fitzpatrick, and runs him through the body in self-defence. The officers at once arrest him.

"Tom Jones is now at the crisis of his misfortunes. He lies in prison charged with murder; he has ruined himself irretrievably with Sophia; he is finally disgraced with All-worthy, and Squire Western is beside himself with glee at the prospect of seeing him hanged. In this predicament he now learns something that adds horror to the tragedy. Mrs. Waters has been identified as Jenny Jones, and he believes that Jenny Jones is his mother. He has unwittingly incurred the guilt of Oedipus.

"But events, for which his generosity towards others is in no small part responsible, are working in his favour: and a few loyal friends are striving against long odds to right him. In a few more chapters the revolution of his fortunes is ushered in with a naturalness and a show of probability beyond all praise. Coincidences there are, but not of the sort that excite decision. By chance, Mr. Allworthy hears that Black George, who picked up and appropriated five hundred pounds which he gave Jones, is trying to invest exactly that sum. The theft is discovered and Allworthy put on the track of Tom's other mishaps. A letter is receieved from Squire, who on his death bed confesses how iniquitously he had scandered Jones, and exonerates him from the accusations that led to his dismissal. Mr Fitzpatrick recovers, and Mr. Jones is relieved from the guilt of murder. On the collapse of this charge, Dowling, the lawyer, is detected

in suborning witnesses against Jones, and taxed with the offence divulges that he was commissioned by Blifil. One thing leads to another. Partridge makes it clear that he is not Tom's father. Mrs. Waters lets out the secret. Tom Jones is the son of Allworthy's own sister, who at the point of death had confessed to Dowling and bidden him inform her brother. Blifil intercepted the message, and is even now plotting to remove his half brother out of the world. The revelation that Tom is Allworthy's nephew, and the exposure of Blifil, whose villainy earns him his repudiation by Allworthy, reverse the state of affairs. Tom is now the recognised heir to his uncle. Squire Western, who an hour ago had sworn that his daughter refused to marry Blifil she should be turned out without a rag to cover her, now is wild to see her marry Tom.

"That young gentleman has still to make his peace with Sophia, who has been wounded to the heart by the Bellaston intrigue. This, in truth, is the most heinous of his offences, and has been brought up against Fielding and his hero by generations of critics. Fielding whose critics were in advance of his time, in this case was only too true to its prevailing standards. Moralists have exaggerated the obliquity, and talked as if Jones had gone on deliberately earning the wages of sin, where as Fielding's account is very different. Jones, in the course of his baffling search for Sophia, fell into the Bellaston's snares. On the spur of the moment, when he believed that all worth living for was lost, he accepted a challenge of gallantry, like the typical youngman of his day. But he quickly realized the pitfall into which he had tumbled, and struggled to get clear. And he got clear before many days were past. If he had known more of life, if he had been as wise as his author, Jones would have expressed his shame and humiliation more feelingly. But he was only a saw country lad, learning by experience in a world that was not our world".

II
CONSTRUCTION OF PLOT

Almost all critics have admired the plot of *Tom Jones*. "What a master of composition Fielding was". Exclaimed Coleridge, "Upon my word, I think the *Oedipus Tyrannus, The Alchemist*, and *Tom Jones*—the three most important plots ever planned". In Scott's opinion *Tom Jones* was the most "masterly example of an artful and well told novel" (*Lives of the Enlish Novelists*). "Fielding," he wrote, "in most of his novels, but specially in *Tom Jones* has set the distinguished example of a story regularly built and consistent in all its parts, in which nothing occurs and scarce a personage is introduced that has not some share in tending to advance catastrophe." Thackeray again in *The English Humorists*, pronounced the novel as a "work of construction quite a wonder.

Tom Jones, indeed, strikes one as the most astonishing production of human ingenuity. "There is not an accident ever so trifling but advances the story, grows out of former incidents, and is connected with the whole. Such a literary perfection is not to be seen in any other book of fiction. We might cut half of *Don Quixote* or add, transpose, or alter any given romance of Scott, and neither would suffer. But *Tom Jones* connects the very first page with the very last and it is marvellous to think how the author could build and carried all the structure in his brain, as he must have done, before he began to put it on paper". (Dudden).

These eulogies are not excessive. Fielding had a passion for beauty of form and in *Tom Jones*, he showed himself to be indeed a master of plot—architecture. We can appreciate the merits of his work in this respect, if we compare it with such books as Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle* or Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*. In those the story is little more than a collection of detached scenes and episodes. The conclusion, after the episodes of the hero, comes not because it is logically necessitated by what has gone before, but because the tale must have

an end somewhere—'just as the traveller alights at an inn because it is evening." *Tom Jones*, on the otherhand is a classical example of perfectly coherent story, most carefully planned from the very beginning, progressing slowly but surely through a succession of strictly relevant characters and events, and terminates in a logically appropriate catastrophe" (Dudden). It was mainly on account of Fielding's superb constructive art that Scott bestowed upon Fielding the honourable title of "the Father of English Novel".

But how did Fielding achieve this unity of structure? It is not secured by mere limitation of the subject matter. "The book is a large, full, complex book abounding in incidents and characters. There is certainly nothing meagre or contracted about it. The unity of the whole is solely achieved by means of a severe subordination of all the multitudinous details to the central plan. In the long and elaborate history hardly anything is found which does not in some way or other contribute to carry forward the main action to its conclusion.

"We may observe this in the case of incidents. These incidents often, at the points of the story where they occur, appear insignificant. We do not suspect even slightly that they can produce any effect. But even such a detail as that of a guide mistaking the road to Bristol—has a necessary place in the train of events which brings about the denouement. With two exceptions, which Fielding himself admitted and of which we shall speak later, nothing is superfluous in the novel.

"In another place he exercised himself for relating a apparantly trivial incident (Sophia's rescuce of her muff, which her father had thrown into the fire), on the ground that it did in fact produce by no means a trivial result. "In reality", he wrote, there are many little circumstances too often omitted by injudicious historians, from which events of the utmost importance arise. The world may indeed be considered as a vast machine, in which the great wheels are originally set in motion by those which are very minute and almost imperceptible to any but the strongest eyes."

The same consummate art which is displayed in the management of the incidents is likewise exhibited in the management of the characters. Smollett and Dickens who

had paid little attention to the construction of their stories have introduced characters simply because they are interesting or entertaining. Fielding, on the other hand, introduced his characters—at any rate most, if not quite all of them, with an eye to the parts which they would be required to play in the working out of the plot. In the delight of creating some original and striking figure, he never allowed his attention to be distracted from his main theme. The personages in *Tom Jones* are as life-like and real as any in literature.

Further it should be noted that in the elaboration of his plot, Fielding made it a rule to keep strictly within the bounds, not merely of possibility, but also of probability, He would not impose any violent strain on the credulity of his readers. Hence he deliberately discarded, not only supernatural means of achieving desired results, but also all artificial devices, such as the gipsies and the straw-berry mark in *Joseph Andrews*. His aim was to solve the problem of his story in a perfectly natural, probable and plausible manner. This he himself explicitly stated in his novels very frequently. So anxious was Fielding to safeguard the credulity of his narrative that he made a practice of pausing in the midst of the recital in order to explain any circumstances which might strike a reader as strange or unlikely. He deemed it incumbent on him, for example, to offer an explanation of Partridge's curious conclusion that Tom was a Jacobite, and of his still more curious resolve, after his discovery of error, to follow him to the war or again if Squire Western's unexpected but opportune appearance to Lady Bellaston's London House, or again of the surprising attraction of Mrs. Fitzpatrick's attitude towards Tom Jones, or again of the revolution in the mind of Mr. Allworthy with regard to that young hero. He considered that very special care ought to be taken to account fully for any radical change of sentiment or character ; and censured the comic dramatists for their frequent negligence in this.

"Two other points about the plot may be considered. The first is the masterly skill with which the secret of Tom's parentage is preserved until the movement ordained by the author of its revelation. All that is related in the early part

of the novel concerning Partridge, and Jenny Jones, and the prudish Miss Bridget Allworthy, is admirably calculated to mystify the reader and throw him off the scent. Even in the final book, the letter of Mrs. Waters (*alias* Jenny Jones) is worded with such artful ambiguity that its purport can hardly fail to be misinterpreted. Yet after the disclosure has been made, we find looking back that all the preceding details, so cunningly devised to perplex and mislead, are consistent with and even suggestive of the correct solution. The second point is the completeness of the winding up of the story in conclusion. All the problems here are solved. All the actions are consummated. All the chief characters good or bad, receive appropriate rewards or punishments. Nothing is left unaccounted for or undetermined. There are no loose ends. The drama is played out, and the curtain at last falls on a perfectly finished performance." (Dudden).

Although *Tom Jones* is admirably constructed, yet it is not without faults. In the matter of form it has been criticized both on general artistic grounds and also on the score of particular blunders and inconsistencies.

(*a*) On general grounds the following criticism may be made: "Fielding aimed at keeping his narrative within the bounds, not merely of possibility, but also of probability. And, it must be admitted that, of single incidents, there is perhaps only one which is definitely improbable—"the death-bed scene". when Allworthy, suffering from a feverish cold, beds in the grand philosophic style, a solemn farewell to his household. (*Tom Jones*: XVIII. 2). Yet in several places in the book the story, without actually. exceeding the limit, comes perilously near the extreme verge of what is probable. The coincidences are really too happy, the appearances of characters at the very times and the very places when and where they are required for the advancement of the action, are really too opportune to be altogether credible. For example, when Tom, on the track of Sophia, first comes across the beggar who has picked up her pocket-book, then meets the merry-andrew who has seen her passing by, and finally, being driven by a storm to take shelter in an alehouse, encounters the guide who has conducted her to Meriden, we feel that such a series of lucky

occurrences, though certainly not impossible, is hardly likely to have come about in actual life. (Dudden)

Further the end of the book is very hasty. All the incidents are patched up in the end, as it were and the narrative in the last chapters is excessively compressed. Again the form of the book is somewhat marred, at any rate in the eyes of a modern critic, by the insertion of two long digressions—the story of The Man of the Hill (*Tom Jones*, VIII, 11-15) and that of Mrs. Fitzpatrick (*Ibid*, XI, 4,5,7.) Of these, the relation of Mrs. Fitzpatrick is the less objectionable, since it does reveal facts which have some bearing on the main story and serves also to warn the runaway heroine of the dangers of misplaced attachment and clandestine marriage. For the prolix story of The Man of the Hill there is little excuse.

Further there are two, not very important, episodes which could have been easily dispensed with. The incident of Tom's encounter with the gipsies in the barn (*Tom Jones*, XII, 12) is neither very interesting in itself nor of service to the plan of the story. Its only apparent use is to delay Tom's arrival at Coventry, and so enable Sophia to reach London before he could overtake her. The second incident which might advantageously have been dispensed with is that of Mrs. Arabella Hunt's proposal of marriage to Tom. (*Tom Jones*, XI, 11).

(*b*) The book can also be criticised on the score of particular lapses or inadvertences. As in book V, chapter 10 there is a sudden transition in the story from summer to winter. But these are very minor and hardly come into our view at the first reading of the novel. And as the saying goes that where everything is good, a few blemishes can be overlooked ; so in *Tom Jones* all blemishes of form should be overlooked. And Fielding himself has said something in *Tom Jones* (XI, 1), as if anticipating later criticism.

"Though there may be some faults justly assigned in the work, yet if those are not in the most essential parts, or if they are compensated by greater beauties, it will savour rather of the malice of a slanderer than of the judgment of a true critic to pass a severe sentence upon the whole, merely on account of some vicious part.........cruel indeed would be if such a

work as this history, which have employed some thousands of hours in the composing, should be liable to be condemned, because some particular chapter, or perhaps chapters, may be obnoxious to very just and sensible objections".

Rightly did Scott describe *Tom Jones* as fulfilling the ideal of a well-planned tale, "commencing strikingly proceeding naturally, ending happily—like the course of a famed river, which gushes from the mouth of some obscure and romantic grotto—then, gliding on, never pausing, never precipitating its course, visiting at is wire, by natural instinct, whatever worthy subjects of interest are presented by the country through which it passes—widening and deepening in interest as it flows on ; and at length arriving at the final catastrophe as at some mighty haven, where ships of all kind strike sail and yard."

III

CHARACTERISATION IN *TOM JONES*

The chief merit of *Tom Jones* preeminently consists in the superb realistic portraiture of the persons that carry on the action. Their 'blood-and-flesh vitality', as Lytton called it strikes us immediately. "Whether humorous or serious whether elaborately described or lightly sketched with a few impressionist storkes, almost all of them are unmistakably. They stamp themselves on the mind as real person. We believe in them just as we believe and are interested in living people with whom we are familiar." (Dudden). In addition to the description of Fielding's art of characterization (I section), a few points may be added on the characterization in *Tom Jones*, as Dudden has given them.

(*a*) "First, we remark, their number, variety. Some forty figures appear in *Tom Jones* ; and these represent the most various types. Thackeray drew his characters mainly from the gentlemen and ladies whom he encountered in London clubs

and drawing rooms. Dickens excelled in picturing the humours of the lower social strata. Fielding did not concentrate on any particular type or grade. He set himself to represent, by means of a multitude of divers figures, human nature as a whole, in its instrinsic essence and 'prodigious variety'."

(*b*) "This picture of human nature, however, is limited in two respects. First, though he has given us a Lord Fellamar and a Lady Bellaston, Fielding refrained from including in his portrait gallery members of the highest aristocratic class. This exclusion was deliberate. It seemed to him that the highest society, where a dull uniformity of good manners prevails, and where artificial conventions eliminate, or at least obscure, the distinguishing idiosyncrasies of individuals, affords but meagre scope for the exercise of the talents of the observer and delineator of human nature. He accordingly left the very uppermost life alone, and fixed his attention on the teeming world of the middle and lower classes—the world of squires, doctors, soldiers and servants—the world of people who express their thoughts and feelings with more artless frankness, and take less trouble to hide their personal peculiarities under the cloak of formal propriety. In this world, he rightly believed, human nature could be studied with most ease and to the best advantage."

(*c*) In the second place, Fielding's picture of human nature was necessarily limited by the character and conditions of his age. The people who came under his observation were matter-of-fact eighteenth-century folk—rational and practical, untroubled by ideals, unwilling to probe the the mysteries of life, eschewing heady passions, and intensely suspicious of anything that savoured of 'enthusiasm'. These, homely, sane, pedestrian men and women, he studied and understood. But there are heights and depths in human nature of which he had no experience, and consequently no conception. He could not understand either a great saint or a great sinner. He had no comprehension of spiritual fervour or exaltation, which he would have deemed mere ebullition of hypocrisy or folly ; nor, on the other hand, did he really plumb the abysses of the reprobate and abandoned soul. Ordinary human nature, not exceptionally glorified, not exceptionally debased, was the subject of his

investigation : the extra-ordinary potentialities of humanity for good and evil were not taken into account in his philosophy." Hazlitt's remark about this in his "Lectures on the *English Comic Writers*, is apt". There is nothing at all heroic in the usual style of his (*i.e.* Fielding's) delineations. He does not draw lofty characters or strong passions ; all his persons are of the ordinary stature as to intellect, and possess little elevation of fancy, or energy of purpose. Perhaps, after all, Parson Adams is his finest character. It is equally true to nature, and more ideal than any of the others".

(*d*) "On the basis of his observation of the people actually existing round him, Fielding pictured his men and women as morally 'mixed' beings, compounded of both good and evil elements. He deliberately refrained from introducing into his work either paragons of excellence or (excepting perhaps, Blifil) monsters of depravity. He admitted, indeed, that examples of both in real life were not entirely unknown ; but argued that they were so exceptional that a representation of them in fiction would impose an excessive strain on the credulity of the reader. He thought, too, that the delineation of characters 'angelic' or 'diabolical' was calculated to be instructive or edifying ; since from contemplating either, the mind of man is more likely to be overwhelmed with sorrow and shame than to draw any good uses from such patterns.' (*Tom Jones*. X. 1).

(*e*) "The personages in the novel have one thing in common. With four exceptions (The exceptions are Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick, the unnamed Irish peer who befriended Mrs. Fitzpatrick, the Irish Mr. Maclachlan, who ingenuously hoped to improve his understanding by perusal of the novels of Mrs. Aphra Behn; and the French Lieutenant 'who had been long enough out of France to forget his own lauguage, but not long enough in England to learn ours, so that he really spoke no language at all"), they are all thoroughly and typically English. It is English humanity that Fielding described. It is the life of eighteenth century England that he realistically pictured. Yet at the same time he took pains to reveal, underlying the local and temporal form that universal human nature which is essentially the same at all times and in all places. In other

words he so portrayed the people of his own country and day as to illustrate by their means the constant, intrinsic, fundamental qualities of human personality. Thus notwithstanding its English colouring, his novel is not merely a national epic, an epic of England, but also, as he himself claimed, an epic of humanity, an epic of the life of all mankind."

(*f*) "Then we must remark Fielding's 'subtlety of observation on the springs of human conduct in ordinary characters' (Hazlitt). He was not content (as Smollett generally was) to observe and reproduce external appearances and superficial mannerisms of speech and action ; he sought to penetrate and explore the most retired recesses' of human personality. 'Lead me', he cried in his invocation to Genius, 'through all the mazes, the winding labyrinths of nature. Initiate me into all those mysteries which profane eyes never beheld. Teach me to know mankind better than they know themselves.' (*Tom Jones, XIII, I*). And he certainly achieved his ambition. In psychological insight he was little, if at all, inferior to Richardson. When Johnson, disparaging Fielding, compared the two writers with 'a man who knew how a watch was made and a man who could tell the hour by looking on the dial plate', and when he affirmed that there is more knowledge of the heart in one letter of Richardson's than in all *Tom Jones*, he went strangely astray in his criticism. Fielding also knew the heart. He did not, indeed lay it open and analyse it with Richardson's exhaustive and exhausting explicitness. Yet his understanding of the inner life was scarcely less profound than that of his rival. And this, no doubt, would have been generally recognised, had he not chosen to record his psychological observations in a light and humorous style, which was liable to produce a false impression of shallowness. The famous account of the conflict between conscience and avarice in Black George, on the question of prolonging Sophia's purse of sixteen guineas, illustrates both his penetrating insight into the secret processes of the human mind and his lovely manner of describing them."

(*g*) "In the characterization of this novel Fielding was careful to avoid caricature. He did, indeed, delight in oddities, in quaint and comic traits. He was ever on the look out for these, and when he reproduced them in his book, he did not scruple to

exaggerate them. Thus the peculiarities of such personages as Mrs. Western and Parson Thwackum are obviously heightened and intensified. But the exaggeration is not carried so far as to shake our belief in the substantial truth of the figures. The humorous features are brought out in strong relief, but there is no distortion. The characters are not too eccentric for life."

(*h*) "Finally, we observe that several of the personages in *Tom Jones* are elaborations of characters already delineated in Fielding's earlier works. Thus Squire Western was foreshadowed by Squire Badger (*Don Quixote in England*) and Sir Gregory Kennel (*The Fathers*). Mrs. Honour is a less farcical and psychologically truer Mrs. Slipslop. Lady Bellaston is fashioned on much the same lines as Lady Booby, though unendowed with the latters' unattractiveness. The sensual prude, Bridget Allworthy, was adumbrated in the sensual prude, Lady Gravely (*The Temple Beau*). Old Nightingale reminds us of Sir Avarice Pedant (*The Temple Beau*) and of Leonora's money grubbing father (*Joseph Andrews*). Partridge is a developed and perfected Sancho (*Don Quixote in England*). And the Man of the Hill, who after a lurid career in London reformed and went into retirement in the country, is in some respects a modified reproduction of Farmer Wilson. It is clear that Fielding had no objection to reworking old material." (Dudden). And this habit of drawing characters on previous models is seen even in his last novel, *Amelia*.

Further it should be noted that, in *Tom Jones* as in *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding has introduced a large number of allusions to more or less noted contemporaries. His Object in these allusion appears to have been threefold : partly, to offer passing compliments to certain people whom he admired or wished to please ; partly to enliven his pages with some uptodate anecdotes ; and partly, to impart to his history an air of verisimilitude by sprinkling it with names of contemporary personages. Among the complimentary notices we find tributes to the benevolence and 'humanity' of George Lyttelton and Ralph Allen ("Two of the best and worthiest men in the world") ; to the magnificient eloquence of Pitt, instinct with the spirit of the greatest classic orators, etc.

IV

CHARACTERS

A. Tom Jones

Tom Jones is the hero of the novel and his character has been portrayed, therefore, with all care, "In externals Tom Jones was created after the likeness of Fielding himself, as he was in his youth. He was not, indeed, so tall as Fielding, being less than 6 feet in stature ; but like Fielding, he was one of the handsomest young fellows in the world ; endowed with a very fine person and a most comely set of features. His countenance was almost effeminate in its beauty ; but any appearance of softness was corrected by a most masculine frame and carriage, 'which latter had as much in them of the Hercules as the former had of the Adonis'. He was in truth a robust young man—a tireless walker, a fearless rider, and a boxer in strength and agility almost a match for a professional. He had moreover an air of dignity and natural good breeding, even when dressed in a suit of fustian, with a cheap brass-handled sword at his side, he looked a gentleman.

His character is interesting. He had many sided personality. "Nature had endowed him with many estimable qualities. He was constitutionally frank and open (detesting 'every species of falsehood and dishonesty') ; generous even to excess, chivalrous, disinterested, and, though, quick-tempered, devoid of malice. He had a conscience 'for though he did not always act rightly, yet he never did otherwise without feeling and suffering for it'. He had a strong sense of honour ; though he was apt to be greatly mistaken in his view of what honour required. He was even, in a rather vague way, religious. His outstanding quality, however, on the credit side of his character, was the virtue which Fielding most admired—'good nature', 'goodness of heart'. He was indeed the very incarnation of good natured manhood. 'I do not pretend to say', cried Mrs. Miller, the youngman is without faults ; but they are...vastly overbalanced by one of the most humane, tender, honest hearts that ever man was blest with.' 'I know', said Allworthy, 'he hath been guilty of faults ; but there is great goodness of heart at the bottom'." (Dudden). With all these qualities has

the character of Tom Jones been described and it is these qualities that make him so amiable and attractive.

Now the question would arise what this good nature or good-heartedness meant to Tom Jones. It meant two things—first a readiness to do a kindness whenever an opportunity offered, and secondly, a determination to inflict no injury on anyone, if he could help it. On the one hand, he sincerely delighted in rendering services to his fellow creatures. He was, indeed, 'one of the best-natured fellow alive and had all that weakness which is called compassion, and which distinguishes this imperfect character from that noble firmness of mind; which rolls a man, as it were, within himself, and, like a polished bowl, enables him to run through the world without being once stopped by the calamities which happen to others'. (*Tom Jones* XVIII. 6) : "At other place Fielding says about Tom Jones. 'He was never an indifferent spectator of the misery or happiness of anyone'. (*Tom Jones* XV. 8). On the other hand he would not willingly inflict even the most trifling hurt on anybody. He could truthfully declare that he had 'never done, nor even designed, an injury to any being what ever'. (XII. 10). 'I have been guilty with women, I own it', he cried, 'but am not conscious that I have ever injured any. Nor would I to procure pleasure to myself, be knowingly the cause of misery to any human being'. (XIV. 4).

But in spite of all this goodheartedness, we can not assert that he is an ideal hero. Indeed, he is far from being a model character. He 'had naturally violent animal spirits'. (V. 9), which carried him away into all manner of extravagances. As a lad, he was, 'an idle, thoughtless, rattling rascal', disrespectful to his tutors, and prone to mischievous frolics. Nor, as he grew up, did he acquire sobriety. With all his 'goodness of heart and openness of temper', he was incorrigibly wayward and imprudent so that he was generally accounted (not without reason) 'one of the wildest fellows in England'. His trouble in fact was that—that apart from those two 'goodnatured rules of doing kindnesses wherever possible, and of injuring nobody—he had no fixed principles. He lived by impulse not by reason. Dominated by the emotion that chanced to be upper most at the moment, he was apparently incapable of controlling his passions. When delighted, or grieved or angry, or anxious,

he was apt to fall into paroxysms of frenzied excitement; and to behave literally like a madman. And as might have been expected of one so volatile and unbalanced, his conduct was singularly confused and illogical—a strange compound of good and evil. For instance, he 'scorned a lie', yet lied with obstinacy; but lied only in order to screen a humble friend. Again when in need of money, he thought that it would be dishonest to use Sophia's bank-note (though Sophia would gladly have given it him), yet did not scruple to accept disgraceful wages from Lady Bellaston; which wages, again, on a sudden impulse of generosity, he immediately offered to bestow on a distressed person. Such actions are indications of a disordered mind. Indeed perhaps the most that can be said for poor Tom is that, though heedless and reckless he was not radically vicious and that in 'balancing his faults with his perfections', the latter seem rather too preponderate.' (IV. 2).

The immoral and unprincipled life of Tom Jones has been criticised very adversely by various critics. Dudden observes: "Moralists have dealt harshly with this youngman; yet some pleas may reasonably be urged in his defence. The circumstances of his early life were hardly propitious for the development of character. He passed his boyhood among people who, with very few exceptions, disliked him, magnified his failings, and predicted that 'he was certainly born to be hanged, (III. 2). Nobody really sympathised with him; nobody troubled to understand him, or to give him the judicious guidance which a mettlesome boy requires. Allworthy indeed was kind, but stiff and inacessible; Thwackum used him barbarously; Square was 'active in injustice towards him', Mrs. Blifil at first seemed to hate him, though later she took him into favour; young Blifil never let pass an opportunity of doing him an ill turn. The solitary boy was thus driven to consort with the unedifying friends who alone seemed to appreciate him—the thieving gamekeeper, Black George, and the boisterous, hard-drinking sportsman, Squire Western. It is to his credit that, with such an upbringing, his morals were not worse than in fact what they were.

"After all, the only grave charge that can be brought against Tom Jones is his incontinence with women—parti-

cularly his liason with Lady Bellaston. The two earlier affairs were comparatively venial. The Molly Seagrim episode was brought about by that artful young person herself, who having had amorous experience already, knew exactly how to behave so as to overcome 'the virtuous resolutions of her lover. The affair with Mrs. Waters, too, can be judged indulgently, when it is remembered that Tom was attacked by a clever woman many years older than himself, who deliberately brought to bear 'the whole artillery of love'—'every engine of amorous warfare', in which she was expert—to subdue his virtue.

"The Bellaston intrigue was a far more serious matter, and it is this that is chiefly cited as evidence of Tom's depravity. One recollects the fierce denunciation of that great gentleman, Colonel Newcome.

> 'As for that Tom Jones—that fellow that sells himself, Sir – by heavens, my blood boils when I think of him! I would not sit down in the same room with such a fellow, Sir. If he come in at that door, I would say, 'How dare you, you hireling ruffian, to sully with your presence an apartment where my young friend and I are conversing together, where two gentlemen, I say are taking their wine, after dinner? How dare you, you degraded villain!' (W.M. Thackeray : *The Nowcomes*)

The same disgust has been expressed by many. Richardson branded Tom Jones as 'a kept fellow, the lowest of all fellows'; Lady Mary thought him 'a scoundrel'; Byron, a pretty bad sinner himself, classed him among 'accomplished blackguards' (*Don Juan*). Yet without any question of whitewashing, there are, in this case, certain mitigating circumstances which ought to be taken into account.

"It must be remembered that Tom was a simple country boy, who had never been to London, and who was in consequence, 'thoroughly ignorant of the town', and in particular of the ways of the discreetly profligate society woman, 'whom everybody knows to be what nobody calls her'! Lady Bellaston's advances on the night of the masquerade took him completely by surprise. He 'had never less inclination to an amour' than on that evening; but he feared to offend a person who had it

in her power to put him in touch with his adored Sophia; also 'gallantry to the ladies was among his principles of honour', and however foolishly and wrongly—'he held it as much incumbent on him to accept a challenge to love, as if it had been a challenge to fight.' He, therefore, complied with the undesired invitation. Unfortunately at the moment, he was in desperate straits of money'; indeed, literally, he had not a shilling in the world. Hence the temptation to accept her ladyship's gift of £50 was almost irresistible. But having thus put himself in her debt, he felt that he would be guilty of the grossest ingratitude if he did not make the return expected of him. 'He knew the tacit consideration upon which all her favours were conferred; and as his necessity obliged him to accept them, so his honour, he concluded forced him to pay the price', thus says Fielding in *Tom Jones* about the incident. As soon as, however, he learned from Nightingale what the woman's true character was, and realized that he need not feel particularly obliged for presents which were in fact only 'wages' paid for services rendered, he immediately terminated a connection which had never from the first given him any satisfaction. It may be added that in 1745 the particular misdemeanour of which he was guilty was not uncommon, nor was it generally regarded as exceptionally odious and shocking. And it is but fair that Tom's conduct should be judged by the easier standards of his own century rather than by the stricter code of later times.

"On this episode Scott (*Lives of the Novelists*) makes a singularly inept remark. He writes:

> 'The character of Jones, otherwise a model of generosity, openness, manly spirit mingled with thoughtless dissipation, is...unnecessarily degraded by the nature of his intercourse with Lady Bellaston; and this is one of the circumstances which incline us to believe that Fielding's ideas of what was gentlemanlike and honourable had sustained some depreciation.'

But, in the first place, there is no ground for stating that Tom's degradation was unnecessary. The novelist's problem was to inspire a wild youngman, only too prone to yield to temptation, particularly when it came to him in a woman's shape, with

so profound a distaste for illicit amours, that the reality and permanence of his reformation could be depended on. It may well be that nothing less than a very shameful and painful experience such as that to which Tom was subjected as the paid lover of the Bellaston, could have had power to affect the salutary conversion desired. In the second place, there is no ground whatever for the suggestion that Fielding himself failed to appreciate the wrongness of his hero's conduct. He did indeed put forward such excuses as could fairly be offered of Tom's divagations from the moral path. But he did not condone those divagations, or minimise their heinousness, or let them pass without adequate punishment. On the contrary, we find that for every deliquency of which Tom was guilty he was in some way made to suffer. 'Why do I blame fortune?' cried the young man himself. 'I am myself the cause of all my misery. All the dreadful mischiefs which have befallen men are the consequences only of my own folly and vice'. (XVIII. 2) So from palliating misconduct, the author of *Tom Jones* laid himself out to enforce the moral that every transgression, no matter how strong the temptation to it may have been, is infallibly and terribly visited on the transgressor.

"Some critics have expressed surprise that Fielding, in the conclusion of his novel, did not remove the stain of illegitimacy from his hero. If he had done so—If he had made Tom the offspring of a secret marriage, rather than of a secret intrigue—he would have conformed to the practice of romance-writers, who often began by making a mystery of the origin of the principal personage, but almost invariably ended by revealing him to have been born of distinguished, or at any rate of honest parents. Fielding however, was not a romance writer, but a historian of human-nature. He was aware that the happy 'discoveries' so common in romances were rare in real life. He knew also that in remote country houses, as well as in town mansions, there were not a few woman of the type of Bridget Allworthy—outwardly prudish, inwardly sensual; hiding secret immoralities under a cloak of pretentious respectability. As a realist, therefore, he deliberately adopted the more probable, though in some respects the less satisfactory solution of the birth mystery."

B. Sophia Western

Sophia—'the Somersite angel', is the heroine of the novel. Although, Fielding has described her in accordance with the social mode of the eighteenth century and she, in every way, belongs to that century, yet the attitude that she took up towards her father and her lover—an attitude more characteristic of a modern girl than of an eighteenth century girl—makes her different from girls of the same period.

In her relation with her father we see that she behaved in a way as might be expected of a girl with a mature mind. She was "her father's 'little darling', and 'she returned all his affection in the most ample manner'. She ministered unselfishly to all his whims and wants—playing again and again his favourite jigs upon her harpsichord, though she herself cared only for the music of Handel, hunting with him, when he wished it, though she had no relish for the sport ; and good-humouredly putting up with his drunkenness and coarseness. To her, in almost everything, 'her father's word was a law'. On one point, however, she stood out against him inflexibly—nothing could induce her to wed a man she loathed. While she was willing to promise not to marry anyone during her father's life-time without his full consent, she refused to admit that 'the authority of any parent' can oblige a girl to marry in 'direct opposition' to her inclinations. To this principle of the right of children to resist, in a matter where their whole life-happiness was concerned, the tyrannical compulsion of a parent—a tyranny very generally, and, indeed, according to Fielding, almost universally, exercised at this time—she steadfastly adhered ; and at any cost she was resolved to vindicate it. She was ever prepared to leave her home in the dead of night, to face the perils of the country roads, to endure extreme fatigues, and to hide herself in London, a city entirely unknown to her, sooner than consent to a union from which her sound instincts revolted. When we reflect on the feebleness and flabbiness of the average, young woman of the period, we cannot but admire the forceful character of this young girl, who, without any hysterical fuss, but with undaunted spirit and determination, insisted on her right to choose her own mate, make her own life, and realize her own happiness."

In her relations with her lover Sophia was no less admirable. It is true that we may not believe in the doctrine of 'love at first sight'. yet what if one thinks that one would be happy when one followed this. And in the case of Sophia this is true. "She fell in love with Tom without realizing that she had done so.

"......from this day Sophia began to have some little kindness for Tom Jones, and no less aversion for his companion (Blifil). ......Many accidents from time to time improved both these passions in her breast, which, without our recounting, the reader may well conclude, from what we have before hinted of the different temper of these lads, and how much the one suited with her own inclinations more than the others. To say the Truth, Sophia, when very young, discerned that Tom, though an idle, thoughtless rattling rascal, was nobody's enemy but his own ; and that master Blifil, though a prudent, discreet, sober young gentleman, was at the same time strongly attached to the interest only of one single person." (*Tom Jones*, IV. 5)

It was the story of his connection with Molly Seagrim that made her aware of the state of her feelings. She was ashamed of the affection which she had unconsciously cherished for the young man, and 'summoned every argument her reason...... ...could suggest, to subdue and expel it'. Then Tom broke his arm in rescuing her from an unruly horse, and his 'great bravery' on this occasion revived her passion. When she presently discovered that, he, on his side, was desperately in love with her, she did not disguise the tenderness she felt for him. Thereafter she showed herself both courageous and magnanimous. It took courage to contemplate union with a man whom everyone spoke ill of. And it needed no little magnanimity to forgive his numerous short-comings. The clearsighted girl was not ignorant of those faults, but she recognised also the amiable qualities of her lover, and did not expect perfection. She was indeed, very forbearing. She was willing to overlook the old scandal about Molly. She was ready even to excuse the shocking affair at Upton, as a dereliction due in part to Tom's despair of winning herself. What she could not pardon was his proposal of marriage to Lady Bellaston, at 'the very time' (as she wrote) 'when you would have me imagine you was under such concern on my account'. Such levity seemed to her so utterly inconsistent with genuine affection that she resolved to discard the young

man for good and all; nor could the pursuation of Mr. Allworthy; or the objurgation of Squire Western, or the explanation of Mrs. Miller induce her to restore to her favour one whom she had come to regard as no better than 'a good natured libertine'. Only at the last, when she was thoroughly convinced of the sincerity of Tom's repentance, and felt quite sure that she should rely on his fidelity in the future, did she consent, in the most delightful manner imaginable, to give him her hand. Sophia's ideas of the obligation of purity on men, as well as on women, were certainly in advance of her age. 'The delicacy of your sex', said Tom, 'can not conceive the grossness of ours, nor how one sort of amour has to do with the heart'. 'I will never marry a man', replied Sophia, very gravely, 'who shall not learn refinement enough to be as incapable as I am myself of making such a distinction'.

But in spite of all this "Sophia's charm is irresistible. Happily Fielding did not fall into the mistake of making her, in Square's phrase, 'perfectly perfect'. She was not exempt from trifling failings. Though she hated deceit, she permitted herself 'a little fibbing' and 'a little well directed flattery' now and then, to extricate herself from difficult situations, though ordinarily very sweet tempered, she could flame into an angry passion on occasion; she had also a spice of vanity, which caused her, though only for a moment, to toy with the idea of playing the part of a tragedy heroine, sacrificing herself to her father's wishes, and figuring pathetically as martyr to filial duty. But these tiny flaws—if flaws they can be called—only display her as natural and human. They in no wise lessen our appreciation of her noble qualities of head and heart— her good sense and good feeling, her calm courage, in face of life's difficulties and perplexities, her gaiety and candour. Sophia was Fielding's ideal of what a thoroughly wholesome and amiable English girl should be; he confessed himself 'greatly in love with her', and was convinced that his readers would love her also."

Yet the character of Sophia has evoked adverse criticism of not a few critics. Richardson absurdly described her as 'so fond, so foolish, and so insipid'—preposterously ill-judged phrases, which, Thackeray (who should have known better) echoed in his 'fond, foolish, palpitating little creature' in *English Humourists*. Byron (*Don Juan*, Cant, XIII),

on the other hand, seems to have thought her too 'emphatic'. Yet all these criticisms do not lessen her charm. She remains, unscathed by criticism, one of the most attractive and satisfying heroines in English literature.

C. Squire Western.

Squire Western is the most original character in *Tom Jones*. Dudden observes : "It is possible that in creating this supremely humorous figure Fielding had a definite contemporary figure in mind. If so, his model was probably Carew Harvey Mildmay—Horace Walpole's 'old Midmay, whose lungs and memory, and tongue will never wear out'—who died in the eightees at the age of ninety-four....It is likely, however, that for his delineation of Mr. Western, he did not confine himself to a single model, but gathered hints from the personalities of other rural gentleman whom he had met on his hunting excursion s in Somerset and Dorset. For some while he had been studying the character of the typical 'booby squire' and had already produced preliminary sketches of the species in Squire Badger and Sir Gregory Kennel. Mr. Western is the final and perfect embodiment of the distinguishing peculiarities—or of what Fielding conceived to be the distinguishing peculiarities of this rugged race of men.

"Squire Western, with his broad Somersetshire dialect, his volleys of oaths and curses, his gross talk even in the presence of ladies, his extravagant caperings and hallowings, and his uncouth manners which, in his sister's opinion 'deserved a cane', is indeed an amazing figure. He was a sportsman of the old school. All his thoughts and interests were centred 'either in the field, the stable, or the dog kennel.' Every morning he was engaged with hunting or some violent outdoor exercise ; after his two o'clock dinner he passed the time in deep polations with some boon companion, and when he went to bed, he was generally so drunk that he could not see. Apart from sport (in 'which no man was more expert'), and the business of conserving and augmenting his fortune (in which he was perfectly versed), he was singularly destitute of knowledge and understanding. He professed himself an ardent Jacobite ; but his political utterances were merely parrot—repetitions of the slogans of *The London Evening Post*.

He was a justice of the peace; but he knew little or nothing of the law which he was supposed to administer, and on account of his reckless exercise of his magisterial authority, had 'had two informations exhibited against him in the King's Bench'. On almost every subject that could interest an intelligent being, he displayed 'more than Gothic ignorance'.

"He was the most excitable, the most emotional, the most unreasonable of men. Everything that he said or did was violent and extravagant; 'for he had not the least command over any of his passions, and that which had at any time the ascendant in his mind hurried him to the wild excuses.' Thus when a partridge was shot by trespassers on his estate, he stormed and raged 'in as high terms and as bitter language as if his house had been broken open, and the most valuable furniture broken out of it.' When a maid-servant was insolent, he 'swore twenty oaths he would send her to bride well,' and was only deterred from this illegal proceeding by the expostulation of his clerk. His irrationality is best exemplified by his treatment of his daughter. He was really devoted to this girl; yet because she refused to acquiesce in his plans for her welfare, he did not hesitate to use her cruelly. The very fact of her daring to fall in love, without his permission, enraged him. 'How! in love!', he cried in a passion, 'in love, without acquainting, me! I'll disinherit her; I'll turn her out of doors, stark-naked, without a farthing. 'Is all my kindness vor' ur, and vondness. O'ur come to this, to fall in love without asking me leave?' When he learnt that the object of her affection was Tom Jones, he boiled over with fury. 'I will turn her out of doors; she shall beg, and starve, and rot in the streets. Not one hapenny, not a hapenny shall she ever hae o'mine.' He was resolved that she should marry Blifil, whether she would or no. The match, which involved the ultimate joining of two rich estates, was a sound business proposition, and his whole heart was set upon it. 'I tell thee, it will preserve me', he vociferated to Sophia; 'It will give me health, happiness, life, everything. Upon my soul I shall die if dost refuse me; I shall break my heart, I shall upon my soul.' Then when she still resisted, he clenched his fist, and bit his lips, and bellowed his determination that the marriage should take place, though she should hang herself the next morning.

"Thus the man was a barbarian. His landlady considered him a 'very hastish kind of a gentleman'; his sister pronounced 'absolutely a perfect croat'; Lady Bellaston honoured him with the appellation of 'Hottentot'. Yet, with all his boorishness and brutality, he was not altogether disreputable. He was capable of a rough sort of kindness; and his love for his girl—which though oddly exhibited, was absolutely genuine—did to some extent humanize and civilize him. Very pleasant, at any rate, is the final picture of this rough sportsman, playing in the nursery with his little grand-daughter a year and a half old, and vowing that her baby prattle has 'sweeter music than the finest cry of dogs in England'."

Squire Western has been charged with a harsh treatment towards his daughter Sophia. Yet as we have seen above these charges are hardly justified. He was after all the man of his time and it is but natural that like a common man he should think and decide in the way the men of the day did. What the critics forget is that they confuse between the comparative behaviours of Sophia and her father. They criticise latter because, they judge him by the standard of one own day. The only explanation—which is sufficient—is that Squire Western was a simple countryman who could not see beyond his time and that Sophia was a lady who did much beyond his age and time. Indeed, as we have seen earlier her attitude towards her father and Tom Jones is more like that of a modern girl than that of an eighteenth century girl. Therefore, it will be unjust to judge Squire Western in the aforesaid way.

D. Squire Allworthy

The aim of Fielding, in depicting Allworthy was to give an example of an ideally goodman. "Unfortunately he attempted to do this by means of presenting a glorified portrait of his friend and patron, Ralph Allen of Bath. The result is far from satisfaction. No doubt he was hampered by the necessity of painting such a likeness as would be acceptable to the living original. But whatever the reason of the failure may have been, the figure of Allworthy is stiff, wooden, and lacking in verisimilitude—though R. L. Stevenson somewhat exaggerated when he described it as 'only ink and paper'.

"Even as a type of consummate virtue, Allworthy is hardly satisfactory. He is represented as the very incarnation of kindliness and goodness. But he is too dull and unintelligent to be altogether admirable. Though replite with benevolence, and ever ready to believe the distresses of other's, he has not the sense to confine his benefactions to deserving objects. He thus becomes the dupe of plausible hypocrites and adventurers, whom a man of modern perplexity would easily have seen through. Under their influence he is led away to perpetrate even so great an injustice as the expulsion of Tom from his home without a full and thorough examination of the charges brought against him. And as he is wanting in sagacity, so also he is deficient in humour. He takes himself always with solemn seriousness. In his gravely decorous behaviour and ponderous, light-toned discourses, he seems to be aping the style of the perfect philosophical man, as conceived by the Stoic Writers. Allworthy, in short, is an upright and honourable country gentleman, whose character commands respect; but as an ideal of human excellence—an earthly pattern of heavenly goodness—'the glory of the human species—he is inadequate," (Dudden)

E. Reverend Roger Thwackum

Thwackum was one of the inmates Allworthy's household. The original idea of this character is believed to have been furnished by an ecclesiastic who was almost certainly known to Fielding—the Reverend Richard Hele, Vicar of Britford. Prebendary of Salisbury, and Master of the School in the Cathedral Close. "With his eye on this dignitary, Fielding proceeded to paint the highly coloured figure of the tutor of Tom Jones. Parson Thwackum is allowed to be an 'excellent scholar' and a most indefatigable teacher, with a great reputation for 'sobriety of manners' and 'devout attachment to religion'; but he is also pictured as a hard-hearted, narrowminded, violent tempered man, a fierce maintainer of the doctrine of the total corruption of human nature, and in practical matters, a stern advocate of the principle of 'doing justice, and leaving mercy to heaven'—though he seems to have thought that little enough of the latter grace can be expected even in that quarter. He comes before us as a pedagogue of the harsh Orbilian type, whose meditations are 'full of birch': and who has constantly on his lips the old

flogging line, *Castigo te non quod odio habeam, sed quod amem*. As a theologian, he is intensely and intolerantly dogmatic, deciding all matters by 'authority', (*i.e.*, by the pronouncements of the Scriptures and their commentators), and prosecuting his controversies in rigid accordance with the formula, 'when I mention religion, I mean the Christian religion ; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion, but the Church of England'. Such exuberances of Thwackum are certainly overdrawn ; but the figure as a whole, is not so exaggerated as to be incredible. At any rate this reverend gentleman never fails to be entertaining, and his volcanic eruptions and explosions in the story are invariably welcome." (Dudden)

F. Thomas Square

Thomas Square has been drawn upon the character of the plebeian philosopher of Salisbury, Thomas, Chubb, whom his admiring fellow citizens at one time expected to achieve a fame equal to Locke's. Square is in effective contrast with the disputatious Anglican, Roger Thwackum, and is an equally disputatious deist. He is drawn as a deist, constantly engaged in controversy, and perpetually mouthing catchwords evidently intended to recall Chubb's favourite formulas—'the natural beauty of virtue', 'the unerring rule of right', 'the rule of right and fitness of things', 'the unalterable rule of right and the eternal fitness of things'. 'whatever is virtuous and decent, and fit and right in the nature of things'.

G. Lady Bellaston

The figure of Lady Bellaston has been portrayed on the basis of the character of the notorious Etheldreda or Audrey, wife of Charles third Viscount Townshend, and mistress of Thomas Winnington. "She is intended to illustrate a particular type of —namely, that of 'intrepid' sensuality', of which some examples were found among contemporary women of fashion, though in Fielding's opinion at any rate, this particular species was comparatively uncommon." (Dudden).

H. Partridge

In the portrayal of Partridge, Fielding took sufficient material from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. "He is unquestionably a Cervantic figure. Just as in Parson Adams, the novelist had

produced a thoroughly Anglicized Don Quixote, so in Partridge he now produced a thoroughly anglicised Sancho Panza. Between original and the translated, Sancho, there are, of course, obvious differences ; but in the latter the essential characteristic of the former are presеved.

"Partridge is depicted as a 'fellow of great oddity and humour', constantly getting into scrapes, on account of his irrepressible propensity for jesting 'without the least respect of persons, time or place'. Though he professed himself wholly devoid of 'impertinent curiosity' and a 'perfect keeper of secrets'; he was, in fact 'the most inquisitive of mortals', and an inveterate babbler, who could never refrain from blurting out the most private matters to anyone who cared to listen. His ridiculous talk flowed incessantly and discursively in an inexhaustible stream, and when once he fairly got going, it was impossible to stop him, or to bring him to the point. What he said, however, could not very safely be relied on, 'for a strict adherence to truth was not among the articles of this honest fellow's morality or his religion'. Incidentlly it may be observed that the term 'honest', as applied to Partridge, must not be understood too literally ; for though his sentiments on the appropriation of his own property by others were unexceptionable, ("it is very proper for the law to hang them all'). his views on the appropriation of others' property by himself were not quite so orthodox.

"Partridge was a jack of all trades—schoolmaster, clerk, barber, surgeon, and tailor. As a former schoolmaster he had a smattering of Latin, and loved to interlard his conversation with Latin words and tags— a habit which was liable to give offence to persons ignorant of that tongue. He was inordinately proud, of his little stock of learning ; it was, indeed, the one point on which he showed himself touchy. 'As to the grammar', he boasted, 'I think I may challenge any man living. I think, at least, I have that at my finger's end.' Another of his peculiarities was his immeasurable superstition. He was a fanatical believer in dreams, omens, prophecies, warnings, witches, ghosts, hobgoblins, and the devil. The cries of a screech owl at his window were enough to frighten him out of his bedroom. The sight of an old beggar woman, whose

petition for alms was disregarded, inspired him with terror of being bewitched.

"Partridge adored comfort—plenty of food, plenty of drink, and a seat by a kitchen fire. He had an insatiable appetite for sisloins of beef, bacon and eggs, and shoulders of mutton, nor was he less appreciative of good liquor, which (his head being none of the strongest) was apt to enliven him amazingly. His dominant passion, however, was one seldom omitted from the constitution of a wiseman, namely, self-interest. It was the hope of obtaining some substantial advantage for himself that led him, though a lover of ease, to go tramping the roads with Tom, that induced him, though an arrant coward, to contemplate entering into the war; and that persuaded him, though a Jacobite, to range himself along with the defenders of King George. He allowed neither pleasures, nor principles to interfere with his chances of making his fortune. With all his foibles, however, he was really a good natured creature, and unswervingly loyal to his young master; who, though he frequently lost patience with him, found it impossible to be angry for long with so simple, so inconsequent, so whimsical a man. Among the faithful servants, or 'faithful follower' figures of English literature—Smollett's Strap, Sterne's Trim, Graves's Jerry Tuggwell, Dickens's Sam Weller and Mark Tapley—this comical English Sancho of Fielding ranks, if not quite highest, at any rate very high." (Dudden)

I. Blifil

Blifil is the villain of the story. "He is the one unreal character in *Tom Jones*, and he becomes more and more unreal as the history develops. At the outset he is presented as an unnatural, but not perhaps quite impossible, little prig—'sober, discreet, and pious beyond his age'; extremely 'careful of his money'; skilled in the art of ingratiating himself with his preceptors by a respectful demeanour and adroit flattery'; and 'strongly attached to the interest of only one single person'. *i.e.*, himself. He is, moreover, both malicious and hypocritical; inflicting injuries on others simply for the pleasure' of hurting them, and always professing the purest motives for the dirtiest actions. Even as a lad, he is exceptionally vicious - But when he becomes a man, we cease altogether to believe in him. The utter vileness of his nature is not mitigated or relieved by a

single redeeming quality. He seeks to hasten the end of his sick uncle by giving him bad news, in defiance of the protest of the family physician; he is bent on marrying Sophia, not merely because he covets her person and fortune, but also with the object of wreaking a horrid vengeance on her for her partiality of Tom; he does not scruple to employ a lawyer to get Tom himself convicted of murder. He is, in short, just the unreal villain of melodrama transferred from the stage into the novel. Fielding's purpose, of course, was to emphasize the contrast between Tom and Blifil—between the good-hearted scapegrace, who though sound at the core indulges in shocking escapades, and the false-hearted blackguard whose inner nature is wholly corrupt, though his talk is always pious and his outward deportment exemplary. But he would have achieved his aim more artistically and more convincingly if he had not made Blifil, so incredibly wicked." (Dudden) Shakespeare did it in a marvellous way, simply because his understanding of human nature was deep. Fielding on the other hand, could not depict a convincing vicious man.

V

THE INITIAL ESSAYS AND THE INCIDENTAL COMMENTS IN *TOM JONES*

The aim of Fielding was to provide both entertainment and instruction and, therefore, he deliberately used the novel as a vehicle for the expression of his artistic and moral ideas and ideals. These explanations are put forward, partly in initial essays prefixed to the several books, and partly in shorter comments interjected, when suitable opportunities occurred, into the narrative.

(I) The Initial Essays

"The regular insertion of an essay at the commencement of each division of the work is a peculiarity of ***Tom Jones.***

Elsewhere the interpolation of a 'prolegomenous' chapter occurs only occasionally. It is true that in *Joseph Andrews*, a much shorter work, we do find as many as three examples, in addition to the important Preface, but in *Jonathan Wild* there is only one, and in *Amelia* likewise there is only one.

"Fielding himself singled out these disquisitions as the parts of his 'prodigious work' which had given the author the greatest pains in composing'; he even declared, 'I can with less pains write one of the books of this history, than the prefatory chapter to each of them'. Nevertheless he considered that they were necessary; partly to secure observance of the artistic principle of contrast; the serious 'essays' being designed to serve as 'foils' to the lighter and more amusing narrative portions of the work; and partly, to distinguish genuine examples of good fiction from 'foolish novels and monstrous romances', turned out by scribblers who are utterly incapable of any degree of reflection, and whose learning is not equal to an essay'.

"The prefatory chapters have, for the most part, no organic connection with the chapters which follow. Fielding compared them with prologues to plays. Just as prologues were, as a rule so slightly connected with the dramas which they prefaced that the prologue to any one play could just as will serve for any other; so, said he, most of the initial chapters might 'so properly be prefixed to any other book in this history as to that which they introduce, or indeed to any other history as to this'. The majority of them, are in fact independent dissertations, which can be taken out of their places and rearranged in any order or even—without injury to the story, though not without loss of pleasure and profit to the reader—omitted altogether.

"In these polished miniature essays Fielding expounded some of his views on literature and life.

" (a) The observations of a novelist on the subject of his art are naturally of special interest, and the student of literature may possibly regard the essays on this topic as the most valuable and important. Fielding claimed to be 'the founder of a new province of writing'; which he named 'prosai-comiepic writing'; or the 'heroic, historical, prosaic

poem'. In *Joseph Andrwes*, he had described the general character of this new species; but he deemed it desirable in *Tom Jones*, to offer some additional comments and explanations.

"At the outset, he emphasizes the point that the writer of a comic prose epic has his rough materials provided for him in the actual facts of human nature. He does not invent them out of his own brain as does the fanciful romance-writer; he discovers them already existing in the world about him. Hence his work had better not be called a 'romance'; it rather resembles a history'. For just as the historian draws his materials from authoritative records, so a writer of the new fiction draws his materials from an authoritative source, namely, 'the vast authentic doomsday-book of nature'. The materials, then, are supplied; but they still need to be artfully 'dressed-up' for the reader. And for a proper and judicious dealing with them two principles are laid down. The first is the Principle of Selection. The good fiction-writer must on no account imitate the method of some 'painful and voluminous' historians, who consider themselves obliged to chronicle all happenings, important or unimportant, with equal fulness; whose, histories, indeed, 'resemble a newspaper, which consists of just the same number of words, whether there be any news in or not'. On the contrary, he must practise the sagacious solution recommended by Horace—passing over common place and insignificant matters, and reporting those alone which are sufficiently curious or momentous to merit a place in his history. The second principle is the Principle of Lovely and Varied Presentation. A momentous record of facts and events is inevitably boring. The story writer, therefore, should seize every opportunity of enlivening his narrative with 'sundry similes, descriptions, and other kind of poetical embellishments', nicely calculated to 'refresh the mind' and preserve the attention from falling asleep. 'Without interruptions of this kind the best narrative of plain matter of fact must overpower every reader; for nothing but the everlasting watchfulness, which Homer has ascribed only to Jove himself, can be proof against a newspaper of many volumes.

"For successful composition of the new style of fiction an author must possess, according to Fielding, four major quali-

fications. The first is Genius ; which is defined as 'that power, or rather those powers of the mind, which are capable of penetrating into all things within our reach and knowledge, and of distinguishing their essential differences'. In other words, it is the combination of the two great natural gifts of invention and judgment—of invention, by which is meant, not 'a creative faculty, or finding out, or, to explain it at large, a quick and sagacious penetration into the true essence of all the objects of our contemplation' ; and of judgment, or the power of discerning the differences between these objects. So defened genius is clearly necessary for a correct delineation of the world and human life. The second requisite is Learning, without the assistance of which 'nothing pure, nothing correct, can genius produce'. The view taken by some critics that 'learning tends to fetter the natural spriteliness and activity of the imagination', and is, therefore, not only useless, but positively detrimental to an imaginative writer, is sufficiently refuted by the examples of such authors as Homer and Virgil, who were, 'masters of all the learning of their times'. In truth, natural gifts alone are inadequate for the production of great fiction. Natural gifts are the tools of the literary craftsman ; but learning must sharpen those tools for use ; must prescribe rules to direct them in their work and must furnish at any rate part of the materials worked on. At the very least, 'a competent knowledge of history and of the *belles letters*' is indispensable. The third qualification is Conversation or personal experience of men and women. For a sound knowledge of human nature cannot be acquired from books. It can be obtained only by direct personal intercourse—personal intercourse not with one class only, or one particular social type, but 'with all ranks and degrees of men'. The fourth qualification of the good fiction writer is Sympathy, Sensibility, the Feeling Heart. Neither genius, nor learning, nor experience, nor all three together, can raise this writer to the very highest level, unless he possesses this quality also. Thus Fielding puts the point :

'The author who will make me weep, says Horace, must first weep himself. In reality, no man can paint a distress well which he doth not feel while he is painting it ; nor do I doubt, but that the most pathetic and affecting scenes have been

writ with tears. In the same manner it is with the ridiculous. I am convinced I never make my reader laugh heartily but where I have laughed before him.' (*Tom Jones* XI. 1)

The noble passions particularly—love, generosity, gratitude, pity—can be adequately described only by one who is himself susceptible of such high emotions.

"In the new realistic fiction it is by no means necessary that the characters and incidents should be trite and commanplace—such as might be met with 'in the home of articles in a newspaper'. The author should rather endeavour to interest his readers by relating what is marvellous and surprising, provided always that he keeps strictly within the limits of what is credible. Fielding applies to the craft of novel-writing a maxim of Pope—'The great art of poetry is to mix truth with fiction, in order to join the credible with the surprising.' "

"To safeguard the credibility of the story three rules must be observed. The first is the Rule of Possibility. Nothing should be related which is beyond the range of human capacity. Supernatural agencies should be eliminated. Even ghosts should be, seldom, if at all introduced. Miracles are banned, All the occurrences described must be capable of being explained as the effects of natural causes. The second rule is the Rule of Probability. While it is admitted that many improbable things have happened, and do happen, in real life—things which are sufficiently attested by evidence, and which a historian of public transactions is consequently justified in recording—yet the novel-writer, if he would avoid 'that incredulous hatred mentioned by Horace': had better refrain from introducing such matters into his narrative. In his characterization also, he would be wise not to picture persons of extraordinary goodness or extraordinary wickedness for, though examples of both types have existed and do exist, they have been met with so seldom that any representation of them in a work of fiction is almost sure to provoke the incredulity of the reader. The third rule is the Rule of Conformity of Action with the character of the Performer. This means that the actions described must be not only possible and probable in themselves, but also congruous with the natures and characters of the particular persons who are supposed to perform them. For what may be only surprising in one man may seem highly improbable, and even impossi-

ble in another. For example, the good actions of M. Antonius and the bad actions of Nero are, in each case, wonderful but believable ; what is quite unbelievable is that a man with the character of Antonius could act like Nero ; or that a man with the character of Nero could behave like Antonius. 'I will venture to say', writes Fielding, 'that for a man to act in direct contradiction to the dictates of his nature is, if not impossible, as improbable and as miraculous, as anything which can well be conceived.' (*Tom Jones*).

"Among other initial essays dealing with literary topics, there is one in which Fielding defines his attitude with regard to plagiarism. He maintains that a modern author is at liberty to appropriate the good things of an old master, without mention of the source from which he has taken them, but denies that he has a right to pilfer anything from the work of a contemporary without acknowledgement. To this principle he claims to have himself most scrupulously adhered. In another paper, he launches an attack on literary critics for having arrogantly assumed, a 'dictatorial power'. Instead of merely formulating the laws in accordance with which virtue of genius plied their craft, they had ventured to invent laws and to impose them peremptorily on writers. Nor, in their construction of these laws, had they any discretion. He writes thus :

'Little circumstances, which were perhaps accidental in a great author, were by these critics considered to constitute his chief merit, and transmitted as essentials to be observed by all successors......Thus many rules for good writing have been established, which have not the least foundation in truth or nature, and which commonly serve for no other purpose than to curb and restrain genius.' (*Tom Jones*, V. 1).

It may be added that, among the 'defamatory terms' employed by critics, there was one to which Fielding took particular exception. This was the adjective 'law'-'a word', he says sarcastically, 'which becomes the mouth of no critic who is not Right Honourable'. Fastidious judges, affecting a genteel taste, were in the habit of stigmatizing as 'low' any realistic representation of the characters and scenes of common life. By the use of this approbrius epithet dramatic critics had 'succeeded in banishing all humour from the stage', and had 'made the theatre as dull as a drawing room.' Similarly

in literature, if a vulgar rascal like Black George were introduced, the exquisites of the age 'called it low and fell-agroaning'. Yet nature comprises what is 'common and vulgar' as well as what is elegant and refined ; and a realistic delineator of nature must needs reproduce the former elements as well as the latter. The coarse figure of Black George may be offensive to a delicate taste, 'but it is nature for all that'.

(*b*) "In his initial chapters Fielding was more concerned to explain his views on the literary art, and specially on the new style of fiction, than to set forth his ideas about life and things in general. The latter opinions are rather to be found in the incidental comments with which the narrative in interspersed. Yet a few disquisitions on topics of general interest are included among the prefatory essay, and of those perhaps three ought to be briefly mentioned.

"There is a notable dissertation on the nature of Love. Leaving out of account that capricious youthful sentiment which is sometimes improperly called love—'the idle and childish liking' of boys and girls, 'which is often fixed on the outside only, and on things of little value and no duration—Fielding emphasizes the distinction between lust and love. The former is simply the desire of satisfying a voracious appetite with a certain quantity of delicate white human flesh. It might well be called 'hunger' ; for a lustful man hungers after a sirolin of beef ; or an epicure hungers after an ortolan." This passionate hunger may be very violent for a while ; but like every other kind of hunger, it naturally ceases when it has been satisfied. Love, on the other hand, in its widest sense (*e.g.*, love of parents, love of children, love of friends, love of mankind) is a 'kind and benevolent disposition, which is qualified by contributing to the happiness of others', and indeed finds 'a great and exquisite delight in promoting their well-being. Love in the narrower sense of a special attachment between a man and a woman is in substance this same benevolent disposition, with amorous desire added. But since delight in making a dear person happy is the substance of love, while desire, inspired by that person's youth and beauty, is only an accompaniment, love can survive in a good mind, after youth and beauty, and the amorous desire which they provoke, have passed away.

"Another essay headed 'A Comparison between the World and the Stage', illustrates Fielding's tolerant attitude towards human weakness and shortcomings. It is pointed out that, as on the stage, actors often play bad or foolish parts, without being personally bad or foolish, so in the world-theatre men sometimes act ill-parts and play the fool egregiously. 'A single bad act no more constitutes a villain in life, than a single bad part on the stage. The passions, like the managers of a playhouse, often force men upon parts without consulting their judgment, and sometimes without any regard to their talents. Thus the man, as well as the player, may condemn what he himself acts'. The moral of which is that sweeping and indiscriminate reprobation of those who admittedly lapse into errors should be avoided. 'The man of condour and of true understanding is never hasty to condemn. He can censure an imperfection, or even a vice without rage against the guilty party The worst of men generally have the words 'rogue' and ......'villain' most in their mouths'. In another passage in this work Fielding recommends what he calls the 'overlooking disposition', *i.e.*, willingness to take people as they are, without complaining of their imperfections or making irritating efforts to amend them. We must not expect, any one to be free from faults. 'The finest composition of human nature, as well as the finest China, may have a flaw in it ; and, this, I am afraid, in either case is equally incurable ; though, nevertheless, the pattern may remain of the highest value'.

Lastly, Fielding's estimate of Aristocratic society is worth of attention. He acknowledged, indeed, that the members of the highest class were elegant and refined, and possessed a 'liberality of spirit' that was scarcely ever seen in 'men of low birth and education'. But their 'politeness' was vitiated by affectation.

'What Mr. Pope says of women is very applicable to most in this station, who are indeed, so entirely made up of form and affectation that they have no character at all, at least none which appears. I will venture to say that the highest life is much the dullest, and affords very little humour or entertainment......Here except among the few who are engaged in the pursuit of ambition, and the fewer still who have a relish for pleasure, all is vanity and servile imitation. Dressing and

cards eating and drinking, bowing and curtsying, make up the business of their lives.' (*Tom Jones* IX. 1)

Yet though Fielding deemed contemporary high society to be futile and silly, he did not regard it as exceptionally profligate. 'In my humble opinion, the true characteristic of the present *beau monde* is rather folly than vice, and the only epithet which it deserves is that of frivolous.' (*Tom Jones*, XIV. I) The leniency of this judgment is rather remarkable, since in his later writings Fielding paints the highest class in the darkest colours—as thoroughly selfish, dissolute, and corrupt, and actually responsible, to no small extent, for the general demoralization of the community. Probably the latter representation was nearer to the truth than the earlier.

These essays have been commended by almost all critics of Fielding. Sir Walter Scott, the great novelist writes thus: "Fielding considered his works as an experiment in British literature—and therefore, he chose to prefix a preliminary chapter to each book, explanatory of his own views and of the rules attached to this mode of composition. Those critical introductions, which rather interrupt the course of the story and the flow of the interest at the first perusal, are found one second or third, the most entertaining chapters of the whole work." George Eliot also appreciated "those initial chapters to the successive book, of his history, where he seems to bring his armchair to the proscenium and that with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English. But Fielding lived when the days were longer (for time like money, is measured by our needs), when summer afternoons were spacious, and the clock ticked slowly in the winter evenings. We belated historians must not linger after his example; and if we did so, it is probable that our chat would be thin and eager, as if delivered from a camp-stool in a parrot house". (*Middlemarch*).

(II) The Incidental Comments.

Besides the initial essays in which Fielding addressed his readers in *propria persona*, the whole novel is interspersed with his own views about various aspects of life and literature. "Throughout the entire drama which he presents we are perpetually conscious of his presence in the background; and

every now and then, when the humour takes him, he stops the action altogether, steps forward to the front, and agreeably descant on the characters, on the incidents, on the moral lessons to be drawn on particular details, and on things in general. He compared himself, indeed, with the chorus of the old Greek comedy, whose function was to voice the poet's comment on the transactions exhibited on the stage. Nor was he doubtful about the propriety of such *parabases*. The interpolation of direct communications to the reader into the main current of the narrative was actually a part of his deliberately formed plan. 'Reader', he cried in the very beginning of his story, 'I think proper before we proceed any father together to acquaint thee that I intend to digress, through this whole history, as often as I see occasion, of which I am myself a better judge than any pitiful critic whatever'." (Dudden). Thus he justified his comments.

These comments vary in length from two or three lines to two or three paragraphs and are of three kinds. Some merely indicate the procedure which the author has determined to adopt in the conduct of his story. Others are designed to elucidate what is obscure, to account for what is surprising, and to call attention to what is specially noteworthy in the narrative. The rest touch lightly on all sorts and kinds of matters suggested by, and more or less relevant to, the history narrated.

"Under the last heading we find a large number of acute observations, or short disquisitions, on subjects the most various. A bare enumeration will give some idea of the multiplicity and multifariousness of the topics dealt with. In the course of a single novel Fielding offers remarks usually short but sometimes extended on the following—on compliance under protest; on the cruelest kind of ingratitude; on centres of gossip; on the pleasure of tormenting one's partner in marriage; on the overlooking disposition on the divergent diagnosis of physicians; on 'preservers of the game'; on the exposure of false professors of morality and religion; on the importance of prudence and circumspection; on the function of conscience; on the resemblance between high and low life; on women's particular admiration of bravery; on the inconsistency of philosophers; on the cause ef quicksightedness; on the caution of characteristic of

physicians and generals ; on the effect of intoxication ; on the expediency of settling international quarrels with bare fists ; on true wisdom or moderation ; on the excellent method of conveying a lie without telling one ; on natural and acquired distrust of others ; on the three 'grand mysteries' of the publicans' trade ; on sensual appetite and its operations ; on the value of polite ceremonies ; on female courage ; on ways of travelling ; on two kinds of suspicion ; on the pride of servants ; on the force of a repeated argument ; on the mistake of allowing a prejudice against a man's calling to influence our opinion of his personal characters on absolute monarchy ; on the contrast between 'the men of wit and pleasure' of Queen Anne's age and the 'men of wisdom and virtue' of Fielding's own time ; on the sanguin temper ; on 'two opinions concerning charity' ; on superscrupulous people ; on the strange operation of vanity in women ; on hunted heiresses ; on pity and envy ; and on dreams.

"The incidental comments occur more frequently in the earlier books of *Tom Jones* than in the later, when Fielding was in a hurry to get his work finished. They also vary considerably in value. Perhaps the most interesting are those on the importance of prudence, on the function of conscience, on true wisdom, and on the sanguin temper. But apart from individual examples, the collection as a whole is important as affording us insight into the mind of the novelist. The utterances attributed to the characters in the story may, or may not, express the opinions and sentiments of the author ; but no doubt can arise in connection with the declarations which he makes in his own person. In these direct communications Fielding freely reveals himself. Through them we enjoy the privilege of being brought, as it were, into contact with a man of the finest intellectual calibre—a man of observant, reflective, humorous, tolerant, humane—above all, a man endowed with a profound understanding of human nature, such as has seldom been equalled and never surpassed by any fiction-writer." (Dudden)

VI

ETHICS RELIGION IN *TOM JONES*

From the time of its first publication, *Tom Jones* has been criticised chiefly on the ground of its alleged immoral tendency. Richardson, for instance, maliciously denounced it as a "dissolute book......a profligate performance". Dr. Johnson rebuked angrily Hannah More for alluding to a passage in the novel. 'I am shocked', said he, 'to hear you quote from so vicious a book. I am sorry to hear you have read it; a confession which no modest lady should ever make. I scarcely knew a more corrupt work.' Sir John Hawkins, Johnson's biographer and editor savagely attacked the book, as 'seemingly intended to sap the foundation of that morality which it is the duty of parents and all public instructors to inculcate in the minds of young people. He affirmed that the author, by his vulgarization of the ethics of Shaftesbury, and specially by his invention of the cant phrase 'goodness of heart' ; had done 'more towards corrupting the rising generation than any writer we know of'. Carlyle, also, hesitated to recommend *Tom Jones*, 'because their morality is so loose', even though he allowed it as a genuine thing.

But there are many defenders of the novel. In their opinion *Tom Jones* is not an immoral book. Even though it is true that there are passages in the novel which lead us to think that the writer could have dispensed with them without any loss of enjoyment to the reader, yet even as they stand, they are not so immoral as to invite the above-mentioned criticism. Among various defenders of the novel, Sir Walter Scott, the famous novelist, Samuel Taylor Coleridge are prominent figures. Scott, indeed was, so great believer in the moral utility to be derived from ficticious compositions. He held that novels were read for amusement rather than for instruction, and that the common talk about their influence for good or ill was, in the main, disgenuous and nonsensical. At any rate, he was convinced that Fielding's great novel notwithstanding certain jocularly coarse passages contained in it—would do no one any harm.

'The vices and follies of Tom Jones are those which the world soon teaches to all who enter on the career of life, and

to which society is unhappily but indulgent; nor do we believe that, in anyone instance, the perusal of Fielding's novel has added one libertine to the large list who would not have been such had it never crossed the press. And it is with concern we add our sincere belief that the fine picture of frankness and generosity exhibited in that fictitious character has had as few imitators as the career of his follies.' (*Lives of the Novelists.*).

Another defender of the novel was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who insisted strongly on the essential healthiness of Fielding's work, in contrast with the essential unhealthiness of Richardson's.

'I do loathe the cant which can recommend *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe* as strictly moral, though they poison the imagination of the young with continued doses of tinct. lyttae, while *Tom Jones*, is prohibited as loose. I do not speak of young women ;—but a young man whose heart or feelings can be injured, or even his passions excited, by aught in this novel, is already thoroughly corrupt.'

Lytton, again, in a paper 'Of English Notion of Morality' proclaimed Fielding a 'deep, accurate, and scientfic moralist' and deplored the general lack of perception of the ethical motive which inspired him in the composition of his greatest novel. 'Nothing', he declared, 'can more clearly prove our ignorance of real morals, than the fact that no one appreciated this high moral purpose in our author'. But, notwithstanding the few dissentient voices, the immorality of *Tom Jones* was, until almost our own time, one of the generally accepted common-places of literary criticism." (Dudden)

This type of criticism is always surprising to those who have read the book carefully. Fielding himself admitted that he was a realist and that 'he would aver if he had not read in accordance with Nature'. He has painted both the aspects of life, the brighter as well as the darker aspect. But in spite of this it is not to be said that he was not a moralist. He did believe in the didactic function of literature. "He confessedly wrote, not merely to picture, but also to edify; not merely to describe the life of his time, but also to criticize it with a view to its correction. In the Dedication of *Tom Jones* he affirmed that his intention in that composition was threefold :

first, to exhibit the loveliness of virtue and the hatefulness of vice ; secondly to convince men that their true interest lies in the pursuit of virtue and the avoidance of vice ; and thirdly to inculcate the lesson that virtue needs to be guarded by discretion. He insisted that the reader would discover in his pages 'nothing prejudicial to the cause of religion and virtue', 'on the contrary', he declared, 'I declare that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history'. Nothing could be clearer than this. Fielding undoubtedly intended his story to be the vehicle or medium of wholesome moral instruction with Richardsonian solemnity. 'Surely', he cried 'a man may speak with smiling countenance'. He preferred to put forth his serious teachings lightly, using all his resources of art and humour 'to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices'. Unfortunately this lightness of touch was too often mistaken for flippancy, and the earnest moral purpose underlying his work was consequently seldom appreciated." (Dudden). But we should not be led by these prejudiced judgements. We should guard ourselves against any misconceived notion of these biased critics.

We should know that Fielding was not strictly a moral philosopher. "His aim was, not to elaborate a system for the learned, but to formulate principles for the vulgar. He was concerned, not with abstract speculation, but with practical instruction. Like Addison, and Steele and Pope, he was not an original thinker, but a popularizer—a competent amateur in moral philosophy, presenting the conclusion of the experts in simple untechnical forms, adapted to the understanding of inexpert readers." (Dudden). The chief influences in the formation of the moral philosophy of Fielding came from the Bible, the writings of Cicero, and Lord Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue* (included in his *Characteristics*, 1711). For Shaftesbury, who was described as 'the great Lord Shaftesbury', and 'the elegant Shaftesbury', he has great respect. Although it is true that he did not quote him literally and textually, yet he appropriated much of the substance of his philosophy, which he reproduced with some modification in unphilosophical terms. Sir John Hawkins was not far out when he described Fielding's morality as 'that of Lord Shaftesbury vulgarised'.

In *Tom Jones*, Fielding wanted to impress upon his readers the following ethical ideas : The beauty of virtue ; the profitableness of virtue ; the supreme value of 'goodness of heart'; the necessity of prudence in the conduct of life ; and existence of good as well as of evil elements in human nature, which in consequence ought not to be judged too harshly. Now let us see these ideals one by one.

(a) The Beauty of Virtue

"It seemed to him that the beauty of virtue could best be demonstrated by means of examples ; 'for an example', he said, 'is a kind of picture, in which virtue becomes as it were, an object of sight, and strikes us with an idea of that loveliness which Plato asserts that there is in her naked charms'. He wisely refrained, however, from making his examples too perfect ; rightly considering that a deeper moral impression is likely to be produced by instances of natural, albiet imperfect, human goodness than by figures of abnormal excellence. At the same time he never failed to present whatever of goodness there might be in a character in the most amiable and attractive light. The 'beauty of virtue' is so displayed in a Sophia or an Allworthy as to engage the admiration and affection of every unprejudiced mind. Fielding might, indeed, make fun of the trifling frailties which are sometimes associated with virtue, but never did he, even in the slightest degree, depreciate the loveliness of virtue itself.

"On the other hand no moralist has a more scathingly exhibited the essential ugliness and repulsiveness of vice. In *Tom Jones*, vice is stripped of all romantic glamour. Our eyes are never dazzled by the glitter of brilliant blackguardism. We are never allowed to imagine that lubricity can in any circumstances, be an agreeable or charming quality. The vicious persons in the novel—Lady Bellaston and the Blifils – are painted pitilessly in hideous colours. Even in the case of the comparatively good characters misbehaviour is not glossed over. The lapses of Tom Jones, for instance, though some excuses might be pleaded for them, are invariably represented as nasty and offensive,

(*b*) The Profitableness of Virtue

In maintaining the profitableness of virtue, Fielding was careful to dissociate himself from the teaching of prudential moralists, that virtue is 'the certain road' to worldly prosperity. 'The comfortable doctrine', he repudiated as one 'which we don't apprehend to be Christian, which we are convinced is not true, and which is indeed destructive of one of the noblest arguments that reason alone can furnish for the belief of immorality. He was aware that the good man, by reason of his goodness, is often afflicted with great sufferings. Yet he contended that the good man, even in the midst of misfortunes, enjoys 'a solid inward comfort of mind' which more than compensates him for the loss of all the emoluments and gratifications obtainable by vice. This 'inward comfort' consitutes, indeed, the highest happiness within human reach. The choicest luxuries can afford no pleasure comparable with 'the warm, solid content, the swelling satisfaction, the thrilling transports and the exulting triumphs which a good mind enjoys in the contemplation of a generous, virtuous, noble, benevolent action'. (*Tom Jones*, XII 10). The praise of millions cannot inspire that rapture which arises from the consciousness of such a virtuous action. No delight which the ambitious, the avaricious or the voluptuous may experience can equal the delight of knowing that one has served and benefited others. Fielding's argument, in brief is this: The highest happiness consists in 'inward comfort of mind'; 'this inward comfort is obtainable only by virtue; hence virtue is necessary for procuring the highest happiness. Virtue, accordingly, as the means to such happiness, is profitable. 'Believe me', Fielding makes Allworthy say, 'there is more pleasure, even in this world, in an innocent and virtuous life, than in one debauched and vicious.'

"Vice on the other hand, whatever material advantages it may procure, does not bring happiness, and cannot, therefore, be profitable. In the first place, the vicious man is afflicted with 'horror and anxiety', or at least with inward disquiet for there are scarcely any natures so entirely diabolical as to be capable of grave wrong doings without experiencing some pangs of conscience. In the second place, vice in the long run entails all manner of painful consequences. 'Good heavens!' exclaimed

Allworthy, 'in what miserable distress do vice and impudence do involve men ! How much beyond our designs are the effects of wickedness sometimes carried !' Fielding was as strongly convinced as George Eliot of the stern truth that the wrong doer cannot do wrong and get away with it. It is the 'nature of vice', he maintained, 'to bring upon those who practise it sufficient punishment'. The punishment may be delayed, for 'the Devil generally stands by those who are thoroughly his servants, and helps them off in all extremities, till their bargain expires'. But sooner or later men find, as Tom found to his cost that 'follies and vices' are infallibly productive of calamitous results. Things, in fact, are so ordered that vice at long last cannot be profitable.

"It may be noted that in this teaching virtue is represented as enlightened self-interest. The good man, by the practice of virtue, take the surest way of securing what is best and happiest for himself. This was admitted by Fielding. After relating Tom's kindness to the Miller family, he warned the reader not to imagine that his hero 'acted more disinterestedly than indeed he did'. He had, in fact, 'a very considerable interest' in the transactions." (Dudden). Fielding writes in this way about Tom's behaviour :

'He was never an indifferent spectator of the misery or happiness of anyone ; and he felt either the one or the other in greater proportion as he himself contributed to either. He could not, therefore, be the instrument of raising a whole family from the lowest state of wretchedness to the highest pitch of joy without conveying great facility to himself ; more, perhaps, than worldly men often purchase to themselves by undergoing the most severe labour, and often by wading through the deepest iniquity.' (*Tom Jones*, XV. 8)

(c) The Supreme Value of Goodness of Heart

The next thing in this teaching comes Fielding's doctrine of the supreme value of 'good nature' or goodness of heart'. According to this doctrine goodness of heart is the essential constituent of virtue. Many critics have misapprehended the meaning of this phrase. Sir John Hawkins charged Fielding with seeking to substitute 'generous qualities' for 'virtue upon principle', 'good affections' for 'moral obligation and a sense of

duty'. Hawkins maintained that in *Tom Jones* Fieldiug seemingly intended to sap the foundation of morality, 'by teaching that virtue upon principle is imposture, that generous qualities alone constitute true worth and that a young man may love and be loved, and at the same time associate with the loosest women. His morality, in respect that it resolves virtue into good affections, in contradiction to moral obligation and a sense of duty, is that of Lord Shaftesbury vulgarised, and is a system of excellent use in palliating the vices most injurious to society. He was the inventor of that cant phrase, the goodness of heart, which is everyday used as a substitute for probity, and means little more than the virtue or a horse or a dog'. But whatever might be the opinion of these biased critics, "Fielding had certainly no idea of making a distinction between the morality of the goodheart and the morality of principle. In his terminology good-heartedness signifies a great deal more than good natural instincts—'the virtue of a horse, a dog,' as Hawkins put it. It is altruism—the 'equality which is always busing itself without doors, and seems as much interested in pursuing the good of others as its own'; the 'kind and benevolent disposition, which is gratified by contributing to the happiness of others'; 'the generosity of spirit, which is the sure foundation of all that is great and noble in human nature'. Between such good-heartedness and virtuous principle there is no contrariety. In *Tom Jones*, the chief example of goodness of heart is the philanthropic Allworthy. And however Allworthy may be criticised, it certainly cannot be alleged that he was lacking in principle and a sense of duty.

"Fielding's insistence on goodness of heart was evidently intended to correct the superficial notions of virtue which were current in his time. He knew that by many of his contemporaries virtue was identified with mere outward respectability. They were apt to pass a person as good, as soon as they had satisfied themselves 'that he lived like an honest man, owed no one a shilling, took nothing but what was his own, kept a good house, entertained his neighbours with a hearty welcome at his table, and was charitable to the poor'. They laid in short, exaggerated stress on pious speech, seemly action, and decorous behaviour; oblivious of the fact that external propriety may be no more than a hypocritical affectation, and is not inconsistent

with the possession of a thoroughly wicked and corrupt nature. Such shallow ideas of goodness called for correction; and it was with the object of correcting them that Fielding insisted so strongly that goodness is an affair of the inner man, an affair of the heart. He illustrated his teaching by the example of Blifil. Outwardly Blifil was an irreproachable young man, godly in his talk, prudent in his actions, discreet in his behaviour—as good a youngman as any conventional moralist could desire. But inwardly he was vile. He was completely selfish; he was even, what is worse malignant; he was bad in the heart. And that being so, his apparent good conduct counted for nothing. It is not what a man does, but what he is, that makes him righteous; and Blifil, with all his parade of virtue, was a villain.

"In this teaching on good-heartedness Fielding laid down an important principle. Goodness, he contended, depends not so much on man's actions as on his motives and intentions; not on the quality of his conduct, but on the quality of his character. It has to do with the inner nature, with what the man intrinsically is, with the state of the heart. This shifting of the account from the outward to the inward is most interesting." (Dudden) Coleridge who was an authority on ethical matters, declared that 'by no writer' was the 'momentous distinction' between character and conduct, between being and doing, 'so finely brought forward as by Fielding'.

(d) The Necessity of Prudence in the Conduct of Life

Although Fielding believed that goodness lies in the agent rather than in the action, yet he did not think that action was of no importance. He could never have agreed with the opinion of Mr. Square in *Tom Jones*, who deemed all virtue to be matter of theory only." "He held that virtue is always practical. A good being must needs express in corresponding action. But Fielding went even further than this; for he was prepared to concede the conventional demand for an outward show of decorum and respectability. The good man he taught, must be not only good in heart, and not only good in action; he must also take care to present to the world a good appearance. It is therefore his duty to exercise prudence in respect of all externals. He says :

'Prudence and circumspection are necessary' even to the best of men. They are indeed, as it were a guard to virtue without which she can never be safe. It is not enough that your designs, nay, that your actions, are intrinsically good; you must take care they must appear so. If your inside be never so beautiful, you must preserve a beautiful outside also. This must be constantly looked to, or malice and envy will take care to blacken it so, that the sagacity and goodness of an Allworthy will not be able to see through it, and to discern the beauties within. Let this my young readers, be your constant maxim that no man can be good enough to enable him to neglet the rules of prudence: nor will virtue herself look beautiful, unless she be bedecked with the outward ornaments of decency and decorum.' (*Tom Jones* III. 7)

"While Fielding allowed that the errors due to imprudence are less heinous and less irretrievable than those which spring from villainy, yet he was convinced that more people are brought to ruin and disaster by the former than by latter. Hence he took special pains to point out and to illustrate in his story, the crucial importance of prudence in the conduct of life. To teach this lesson was, indeed, one of the avowed purposes of this novel" (Dudden). Fielding has clearly expressed this in the following words:

'I have endeavoured strongly to inculcate, that virtue and innocence can scarce ever be injured but by indiscretion; and that it is this alone which often betrays them into the snares that deceit and villainy spread for them. A moral which I have the more industriously laboured, as the teaching of it is, of all others, the likeliest to be attended with success; since, I believe, it is much easier to make good men wise, than to make bad men good.' (*Tom Jones*: Dedecations)

(e) Good and Evil Exist Simultaneously in Human Life

Dudden writes in this regard: "In Fielding's time the question of the essential nature of man, and of its primary actuating principle, was being hotly debated by ethical theorists. The controversy centred in the conceptions of 'self-love' and 'benevolence'. Is self-love or benevolence man's predominating motive? Is he primarily an egoistic or an altruistic being? Or do the two principles coexist in his constitution?

Hobbes had maintained that self-love is man's fundamental characteristic; and that all human action springs from this passion, which is apt to express itself as aggressive ambition, unrestrained by consideration for others or concern for the general good. On the other hand, the opponents of this theory—Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butter and the rest—while they could not deny that self-love is an element in human nature, strongly repudiated the view that it is the only, or even the principal element. Their general contention was that there exist in man both self-regarding affections and social affections, and that the secret of right living is to preserve the two elements in reasonable equilibrium.

"In this controversy Fielding followed the lead of Shaftesbury. He believed that both self-love and benevolence are fundamental, congenital elements in the human constitution. To resolve everything into self-love alone seemed to him to be equivalent to a denial of the existence of virtue. Hence he emphatically repudiated the theory of Hobbes and his disciples, 'who some years since very much alarmed the world, by showing that there are no such things as virtue or goodness really existing in human nature.' He considered this doctrine to be a libel on humanity. For, though, there are persons in whom the element of self-love is so exorbitantly developed as to render them consummately selfish and vicious, such examples are not common, and certainly do not warrant 'a persuation of universal depravity.' Fieldieg says:

'If there was much more wickedness in the world than there is, it would not prove such general assertions against human nature, since much of this arrives by mere accident, and many a man who commits evil is not totally bad and corrupt in his heart. In truth, none seem to have any title to assert human nature to be necessarily and universally evil but those whose own minds afford them one instance of this natural depravity.' (*Tom Jones*; VIII. 15).

"In Fielding's view, then, normal human nature is compounded of both good and evil. And if, in this compound, the good elements preponderate, we ought not harshly to condemn the whole on account of the intermixed imperfections; Even in good people there must necessarily be faults and

blemishes ; and in respect of these provided that they be not really heinous, a generous toleration—the 'overlooking disposition'—is recommeded."

"It may be added that Fielding did not condemn all self-love as evil. He held on the contrary, that reasonable care for oneself is both natural and justifiable. A man may legitimately seek honours, riches, pleasures, and all manner of gratifications which are not in themselves objectionable, provided that he does so with moderation. He is required to be wisely temperate in satisfying his passions and appetites, but he need not be an ascetic. It is only when self-love grows inordinate, defies control, and dominates the mind to the invalidation or suppression of the beneficient altruistic element, that it becomes vicious." (Dudden)

Thus, we see that Fielding's teaching on morals, if not exactly exalted, is eminently sound and sensible. He never attempted to encourage an average man or woman to aim at exceptional excellence. "He was content if he could persuade them to regulate their lives in general accordance with the dictates of right and reason, and was prepared to make liberal allowance for the infirmities of natures which were in the main good and amiable. His ethics, in short, were those of a sagacious and kindly man of the world, who would not impose on the weaker brethren a stricter discipline than they could bear, yet would sanction no paltering with those fundamental moral laws on the observance of which depend both the happiness of the individual and the well being of society." (Dudden) Boswell has fairly described the character of his instruction. 'The moral tendency of Fielding's writings, though it does not encourage a strained and rarely possible virtue, is ever favourable to honour and honesty ; and cherishes the benevolent and generous affections. He who is as good as Fielding would make him is an amiable member of society." (*Boswell's Life of Johnson*).

Religion

In a novel we do not expect that much should be said about religion. But whatever has been said in *Tom Jones*, about religion, we see that Fielding made mention of religion in terms of most profound respect. In the opinion of Fielding

virtue and religion are 'the greatest perfection of human nature', which 'alone purify and ennoble the heart of man, and raise him above the brute creation....These two in their purity, are rightly called the bands of civil society, and are indeed the greatest of blessings.' "Again he described philosophy and religion as the 'exercises of the mind', which are as wholesome for a disordered mind as exercise is for a distempered body; for they 'strengthen and confirm' the mind, and render a man superior to all vicissitudes of fortune. Although Fielding put philosophy with religion, yet he did not consider the two to be of equal value. On the contrary, he maintained that religion affords a more certain knowledge, a more perfect delight, and a finer discipline of character, than even the most elevated philosophy can bestow." (Dudden). Thus in Fielding's opinion knowledge, pleasure and discipline in life can be secured through religion.

(a) Knowledge through Religion :

"In respect of knowledge, there can be no comparison between the human wisdom of the very wisest philosophers, 'and that Divine wisdom which is alone to be found in the Holy Scriptures.' Those sacred books impart to us the knowledge and assurance of things much more worthy our attention than all which this world can offer to our acceptance; of things which Heaven itself hath condescended to reveal to us; and to the smallest knowledge of which the highest human wit unassisted could never ascend.' In particular, religion gives us a firm assurance of the truth of a future life, which philosophy can put forward only as a more or less probable hypothesis." (Dudden).

(b) Pleasure through Religion :

"In respect of pleasure, neither philosophy nor any other earthly thing can excite a rapture equal to that which religion inspires. It is true that in general Fielding took up a sober, unemotional attitude towards religion. He was inclined to regard it mainly as a matter of practical obedience to the laws of God, and was suspicious of all 'enthusiasm'. Yet in one passage in *Tom Jones*, he enlarged, with almost passionate fervour, on the ecstatic delight experienced by the devout soul, in the contemplation of the ineffable power and glory of the Creator." (Dudden). Fielding writes :

'There is one single art for which whole life of man is infinitely too short. What time can suffice for the contemplation and worship of that glorious, immortal, and eternal Being, among the works of whose stupendous creation not only this globe, but even those numberless luminaries which we may here behold spangling all the sky......may possibly appear but as a few atoms opposed to the whole earth which we inhabit ? Can a man, who by divine meditation is admitted as it were into the conversation of this ineffable, incomprehensible Majesty, think days, or years or ages, too long for the continuance of so ravishing an honour ? Shall the trifling amusements, the palling pleasures, the silly business of the world, roll away our hours too swiftly from us ; and shall the pace of time seem sluggish to a mind exercised in studies so high, so important, and so glorious ? (*Tom Jones*, VIII. 15)

(c) Discipline of Character through Religion

In the opinion of Fielding, the precepts of religion are superior to the instructions of the philosophers in regard to the discipline of character. He says :

'For, however, pleasant and delightful their lessons might be, or however, adequate to the right regulation of our conduct with respect to this world only, yet, when compared with the glory revealed in Scripture, their highest documents will appear as trifling, and of as little consequence as the rules by which children regulate their childish little games and pastimes. True it is, that philosophy makes us wiser, but Christianity makes us better man. Philosophy elevates and steels the mind ; Christianity softens and sweetens it. The former makes us the objects of human admiration, the latter of Divine love. That ensures us a temporal, but this an eternal happiness.'

(*Tom Jones*, VIII. 13)

Although, Fielding respected religion, yet he hated 'that surprising sect, who are honourably mentioned by the late Dr. Swift, as having by the mere force of genius alone, without the least assistance of any kind of learning, or even reading, discovered that profound and invaluable secret that there is no God ? "Yet he considered that downright athiests were probably less harmful than 'false and pretended champions'

of religion, who bring nothing but discredit on the cause which they profess to uphold. Such were all the members of the Blifil family—the scheming Dr. Blifil, who recommended himself to Allworthy by a 'great appearance of religion'; the selfish and covetous Captain Blifil, with his knowledge of the scriptures and inclination to Methodism; Bridget his wife, sensual and ill-natured, but deeply read in divinity and expert in religious controversy; and worst of the lot—the pious-seeming, the pious-talking miscreant, Young Blifil. For people of this kind Fielding had no tolerance. Indeed, if there was one type of character which he completely abhorred it was that of the sanctimonious hypocrite. Against hypocrites, then, and also against all essentially irreligious religionists—such mere formalists as the Brutal Parson Thwackum, for example-- he did not scruple to direct his keenest shaft of satire. He was careful, however, to explain that, in deriding the empty affectation of religion, he was far from intending to ridicule, or in the very slightest degree depreciate religion itself. On the contrary it was with a view to the service of religion that he attacked those who, while they professed to be its friends, were in fact its dangerous enemies". (Dudden). It was not, therefore, religion but the mendacious pretence of it, which Fielding scorned and censured.

It is to the credit of Fielding that in an age which was apt to treat religion as almost negligible, he took his stand as a preacher and maintainer of the great fundamental things—the existence of God, the authority of the Scriptures, the truth of immortality. These things he sincerely believed. And these things he frequently and forcibly asserted, not merely in his more serious writings but also even in his lighter works, and not least in *Tom Jones*.

VII

WIT AND HUMOUR IN *TOM JONES*

In the dedication of *Tom Jones*, Fielding says, "I have employed all the wit and humour of which I am master in the following history; wherein I have endeavoured to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices". In the fine invocation to Genius, again he says, 'Come, thou, who hast inpsired thy Aristophanes, thy Lucian, thy Cervantes, thy Rebelais, thy Moliere, thy Shakespeare, thy Swift, thy Marivaux, fill my pages with humour; till mankind learn the good nature to laugh only at the folly of others, and the humility to grieve at their own".

In the opinon of Fielding the definition of wit is the following which was given by Pope in his *Essay on Criticism* and which Fielding quotes in the beginning of *Tom Jones*:

True wit is nature to advantage dressed';
What oft was thought, but ne'er so will expressed.

If we take this definition of wit, then there is certainly no deficiency of that quality in *Tom Jones*. "The book abounds in, instances of 'commonsense in uncommon form'. As a general rule, however, the author reserved his wit for his own remarks and comments, and judiciously refrained from putting it into the mouth of his characters. He knew that ordinary people do not scintillate in their talk, and, being a realist, did not make the mistake of representing them as so doing. Thus, though many of the characters express themselves is a racy and amusing manner they seldom give utterance to sayings which can properly be called witty." (Dudden).

But the whole of the novel, *Tom Jones* is full of humour. "No English novelist—not Dickens himself—has surpassed Fielding in the sense of the ludicrous. He was indeed, the laughing philosoupher of the novel. He studied with close attention the *comedie humaine* and found it exquisitely mirth provoking. When he took up his pen to record his observations for the entertainment of the public, he did not restrain his joyous laughter. 'I am convinced', he wrote, 'I never make

my reader laugh heartily but where I have laughed before him; unless it should happen at any time, that instead of laughing with me he should be inclined to laugh at me'. In his happy way he laughed at everybody–not merely at Partridge and Squire Western, but also at the stately Mr. Allworthy, and even at himself. He suggested, for example, that the spectacle of Harry Fielding composing a solemn discourse on the virtue of chastity would doubtless strike the reader as exceedingly ridiculous.

"Fielding's laughter is very unlike the better laughter of Swift or Smollett. It is genial, human, indulgent; only occasionally do we detect in it a note of acerbity. Fielding had all the true humorist's vast tolerance, of human weaknesses. He knew that men are apt 'to play the fool' egregiously and he did not let them off without ridicule of their follies. But he knew also that they may lapse into blunders and indiscretions, and yet be in the main good fellows; so the ridicule was not intended seriously to wound or hurt.

"His humour played delightfully on a great variety of material. Not all of this material was elegant and refined; much of it, on the contrary, was coarse and vulgar. But the humour which made marry with vulgar scenes and persons was itself untainted with vulgarity. William White-head, who succeeded Colly Cibber as poet-laureate, remarked on Fielding's 'peculiar art, of writing upon low subjects without writing in a low manner'. Byron, too, referring to vulgarity, observed: 'It does not depend upon low themes, or even low language, for Fielding revels in both; but is he ever vulgar? No. You see the man of education, the gentleman, and the scholar, sporting with his subject—its master, not its slave'.

"In *Tom Jones*, the humour is for the most part artfully controlled. We get but little of that farcical exuberance which is rather too often in evidence in *Joseph Andrews*, though examples thereof are not entirely lacking. The jocose descriptions of the assault on Partridge by his 'Amazonian' wife—'one of the most bloody battles, or rather duels that were ever recorded in domestic history' of the fight in the inn, called 'the battle of Upton', afford illustrations of that boisterous kind of humour which commends itself only to the taste of the very young. Generally, however, in this book such rough and tumble fooleries are avoided.

"The form of humour chiefly affected is the ironical. A light and genial irony—very different in tone from the stern and scathing irony of *Jonathan Wild*—is everywhere diffused throughout the novel. We find it in many of the character sketches. Nothing, for instance, could be more consummately ironical than the portrayal of Captain Blifil, who having himself a surreptitious intrigue with Bridget Allworthy, endeavours to convince her brother of the propriety of punishing bastard children for the sins of their parents: who uses a discourse on Christian charity as an occasion for laying a damaging information against a man who had never done him any harm; who in the midst of his meditations on the fine estate which would accrue to him at Allworthy's death, falls dead of an apoplexy, thus taking the measure of 'that proportion of soil which was now become adequate to all his future purposes'; and whose memory is preserved in a laudatory epitaph, almost every detail of which is wrong. We find it, again in many of the pictured situations. Such is the famous infamous scene in Molly Seagrim's bedroom. Molly, with floods of tears, protests to Tom that she can never love any other man, that all other men are nothing to her, that if the greatest Squire were to come courting her, she would refuse to give him her company. At this very moment the rug-curtain falls, and discloses in a very undignifid posture the grave philosopher Mr. Square, the professed champion of 'the unalterable rule of right and the eternal fitness of things'. But there are few chapters in *Tom Jones* which do not furnish examples of this delicious ironical humour. Irony sometimes overflows even into the chapter-headings. Thus the account of the death of Captain Blifil is insribed, 'A Receipt to regain the last Affections of a Wife'.

"Apart from irony, Fielding ventilates his humour in all manner of different ways. At one time he diverts his readers with an absurd mock-heroic 'combat in a country churchyard, where the sweetly-winding Stour' represents the ready Simois', and village clowns and hoydens burlesque the gallant feats of the Homeric heros. At another time he amuses them with a nonsensical parody of the technical jargon of lawyers or doctors. Again he surprises them with some ridiculous incongruity—as when Allworthy delivers, in the finest stoic

manner, a death-bed valediction to his household, though all the while he is suffering from nothing worse than a feverish cold. Another of his mirth provoking devices is to bring into juxtapposition two diametrically opposite types of character, such as Thwackum and Square, and to cause them to engage in a furious wrangle. Or, once more, a laugh is raised by some ludicrous misunderstanding, as when Sophia and her aunt, discuss a person who would be acceptable as Sophia's lover, each mistakenly imagining that they are speaking of the same man. Another humorous contrivance is to cause a character to give a quite incredible account of some occurrence, at the same time rejecting the obvious explanation as utterly unbelievable. So Partridge relates the hair-raising story of Frank Bridles encounter with the white ghost, scornfully deriding the reasonable suggestion that the 'ghost' was only a white-faced calf, and that Frank at the time of this adventure was drunk.

"Fielding believed that lower life furnishes the best material for humour ; and certainly some of the most humorous passages in this book are found in the reported conversations of the lower class folk, who blurt out their thoughts and sentiments with refreshing naivete. The droll talk of a company assembled around a kitchen-fire, the ludicrous quibble between two maids, the absurdly insolent observations of a waiting gentlewoman to a landlady, afford exquisite entertainment. Best of all perhaps are the unsophisticated comments of Partridge on Garrick's performance of *Hamlet*. The famous account of the simple fellow's visit to the playhouse—evidently suggested by Addison's descriptions of Sir Roger de Coverley's visit to Drury Lane to witness a representation of *The Distressed Mother*—is universally admired as one of the choicest specimens of Fielding's humorous writings.

"Never has there been published a book more light, more bright, more mirthful than *Tom Jones*. Humour abounds in all its pages—humour expressing itself in every mode, from the broadest rollicking fun to the subtlest and most delicate ironical suggestion. Yet at the same time, underneath all the glorious play of humour, we are constantly conscious of a serious substratum of solid thought and sympathetic feeling. The gay and the grave—it is a fascinating combination. Surely,

if Fielding had written nothing else, *Tom Jones* alone would have entitled him to a place in the company of the great literary artists of the ages, 'who have sent their satire laughing into the world'." (Dudden)

VIII

STYLE OF FIELDING IN *TOM JONES*

Though Fielding has been attacked on various grounds, yet almost all critics have praised him for his prose style. George Eliot referred admiringly to 'the lusty ease of his fine English'. Augustine Birrell praised his 'superb lusty style, which carries you along like a pair of horses over a level moorland road.' Andrew Lang wrote, "There is somewhat inexpressibly heartening to me in the style of Fielding. One seems to be carried along, like a swimmer in a strong, clear stream trusting oneself to every whirl and eddy, with a feeling of safety, of comfort, or delightful ease in the motion of the elastic work." Hartley praised Fielding as 'a master of style.' and finely affirmed that, in his four great books, he 'did so nobly by his nation and his mother tongue, that he that would praise our splendid, all comprehending speech aright has said the best he can of it when he says that is the speech of Shakespeare and Fielding' John Stuart Mill relates in his *Autobiography* that at one time he endeavoured to improve his own style by 'assiduous reading' of Fielding, who seemed to him to combine 'in a remarkable degree ease with force.' The combination of these two qualities of ease and strength in Fielding's style has impressed many critics. 'The heartening' quality of Fielding's style—the tonic freshness and breeziness which stimulates and braces even the most jaded reader—has been noted by more than one critic. Samuel Taylor Coleridge said of *Tom Jones*, 'There is a cheerful, sunshiny, breezy spirit that prevails everywhere'; and observed that to take up Fielding's books is 'like emerging......'into an lawn on a breezy day in May.' Edmund George remarked

of *Tom Jones* that 'the winds of heaven blow along the pages,' and characterized Fielding's work in general as 'always breezy and healthy'. (*Eighteenth Century Literature*). According to A. H. Bullen 'the full-blooded, bracing life pulses in the pages of Fielding's novels.'

"Fielding's style is easy, unlaboured, familiar, to the point, of occasional irregularity, but consummately vivid, vivacious and vigorous. His sentences come flowingly, without any apparent strain or effort; and they are always distinguished by logic and musical rhythm. Hardly ever does one come across an illogical or inharmonious sentence. His command of language is remarkable. Notwithstanding an allusion which he makes to the 'pains' of composition, he never seems to have the slightest difficulty, in saying whatever he wishes to say, and in saying it effectively. Indeed, if the test of a good writer be a capacity for expressing his meaning fully, exactly, forcibly, and felicitously, then Fielding must be acknowledged to be a writer of well nigh perfect prose.

"Both as a man and as a stylist, Fielding is simple. He hates pretentiousness and affectation. Hence he makes no attempt to cultivate an elaborate, embroidered style. He is not consciously a manipulator of words. It is true that he has an enviable flair for the *mot juste*, for the beautifully adequate phrase; but his words and phrases seem to fall from him naturally, almost inevitably, and there is no suggestion that he is artfully picking and choosing his expressions, or contriving fine-sounding periods, or manufacturing brilliant conceits. Simplicity, sincerity, and lucidity are his literary characteristics. The fopperies of euphuism never appealed to him.

"He is admirably skilled in adapting his style to the subject-matter treated. He can produce, apparently with equal facility, passages of plain and perspicuous narrative; passages of majestic eloquence, in the manner of classical moralists and orators; conversational passages, wherein, as it were, he chats informally with his readers; passages of subtle irony or audacious humour; and occasionally even passages of genuine poetic quality. The lovely description of Sophia is a remarkable example:

...... 'bedecked with beauty, youth, sprightliness, innocency, modesty and tenderness, breathing sweetness from her rosy lips, and darting brightness from her sparkling eyes, the lovely Sophia comes.'

Or, Again,

'Such was the outside of Sophia; nor was this beautiful frame disgraced by an inhabitant unworthy of it. Her mind was every way equal to her person; nay the latter borrowed some charms from the former; for when she smiled the sweetness of her temper diffused that glory over her countenance which no regularity of features can give. (*Tom Jones*, IV. 2).

The half-gay, half-serious chapter entitled 'An Invocation' is also an example of a prose which possesses the beauty and melody of poetry.

"He is particularly accomplished in dialogue. Before his time dialogue was perhaps the weakest feature of English fiction. Richardson, indeed, had done a good deal to improve it, but even in Richardson the dialogue is too often lacking in naturalness and animation. Fielding, however, stands out as a master of the art of reporting conversation. with delicate adjustment of the kind of talk to the kind of talker. He presents convincingly all styles—the measured utterance of Mr. Allworthy, the blatant vociferation of Squire Western, the sentimantal effusiveness of Mr. Miller, the plain business parlance of Old Nightingale, the spluttered outbursts of Thwackum, the rambling loquacity of Partridge. Even the muddled speech of country boors, brought out with great difficulty and many scratchings of the head is not beyond his power to imitate.

"In Fielding's own prose, as distinct from reported conversation, there are three points which attract attention.

"First, he has a few—but only a very few—characteristic stylistic mannerism. Apart from the frequent recurrence of certain favourite phrases—such as the expression 'To say the truth', with which he constantly opens his sentences—the most marked peculiarity of his writing is his most invariable use of the archaic word forms 'hath' for 'has' and 'doth' for 'does'. It is true, indeed, that he is not quite the only writer of the period who

employes these oblescent locutions. William Mason in the *Letters* introductory to his *Elifrida* (1752) and Smollett occasionably in the dialogue in his novels, write 'hath' and 'doth' in place of 'has' and 'does' respectively. But practically all other contemporary authors prefer the modern 'has' and 'does'. With Fielding, however, the old fashioned word-usage is so consistent and habitual that its presence or absence is recognized as one of the major tests to determine whether an anonymous work which might be attributed to him is really his or not. In other respects his manner of writing is wonderfully modern—as modern as that of Horace Walpole.

"Secondly, he has a distinguishing predilection for mock-heroic burlesque. The brilliant account of the fight in the churchyard is worth noting."

'Having scoured the whole coast of the enemy, as well as any of Homer's heroes ever did, or as Don Quixote or any knight-errant in the world could have done, he returned to Molly whom he found in a condition which must give both me and my reader pain, was it to be described here. Tom raved like a madman, beat his breast, tore his hair, stamped on the ground, and vowed the utmost vengeance on all who had been conceived. He then pulled his coat and buttoned it around her, put his hat upon her head, wiped the blood from her face as well as he could from her handkerchief, and called out to the servant to ride as fast as possible for a ride-saddle, or a pillion, that he might carry her safe home.' (*Tom Jones*, IV. 8)

The description, inspired by the 'Graces', of the amorous attack of Mrs. Waters of Tom Jones is also in the same vein.

'First, from two only blue eyes, whose bright orbs fleshed lightning at their discharge, flew forth two pointed ogles ; but happily for our hero hit only a vast piece of beef which he was then conveying into his plate, and harmless spent their force. The fair warrior perceived the miscarriage and immediately from her fair bosom drew forth a deadly sigh. A sigh which none could have heard unmoved, and which was sufficient at once to have swept off a dozen beaus ; so soft, so sweet, so tender that, the insinuating air must have found its subtle way to the heart of our hero, had it not unluckily been driven from his

ears by the coarse bubbling of some bottled ale, which at that time, he was pouring forth. Many other weapons did she assay; but the god of eating (if there be any such deity, for I do not confidently assert it) preserved his votary; or perhaps it may not be *dignus vindice nodus*, and the present security of Tom Jones may be accounted for by natural means; for as love frequently preserves from the attacks of hunger, so may hunger possibly, in some cases, defend us against love.

'The fair one, enraged at her frequent disappointments, determined on a short cessation of arms. Which interval she employed in making ready every engine of amorous warfare for the renewing of the attack when dinner should be over.

"No sooner then was the cloth removed than she again began his operations. First, having planted her right eye against Mr. Jone, she shot from its corner a most penetrating glance; which though great part of its force was spent before it reached our hero, did not vent itself absolutely without effect.........' (*Tom Janes*. IX. 5).

Lord Monoboddo, indeed, though he regarded Fielding as 'one of the greatest poetical geniuses of this age', objected his mock-heroics on the two-fold ground; that they make 'too great a change of style', being, 'as it were, gaudy 'patches' on what is otherwise 'simple and familiar'; and they impair the probability of the narrative, which ought to be carefully, studied in all works that......are imitations of real life and manners'. Nor is the objection without weight. Fielding, however, had a particular fondness for those burlesque drolleries, and deliberately included them among those 'similes' descriptions, and other kind of poetical embellishments which he deemed to be necessary for the enlivenment of his novel.

"Thirdly, his style, without being in the least pedantic, is throughout imbued and saturated with literature and learning. He writes always as a scholar, as a student of the humanities, as a man with large knowledge of books. It is certainly strange that Thackeray should ever have committed himself to the monstrous statement that Fielding 'makes an absurd brag of his two-penny learning'. Nothing, in fact, could be more untrue. For, in the first place, Fielding does not 'brag'. Though he considers learning to be indispensable

for good writing, and prays that a generous portion thereof may be granted to himself, he makes no ostentatious display of erudition. His work is indeed shot through with quotations and literary allusions. He produces these things, naturally and easily, from his capacious memory and applies them felicitously for the elucidation of his subject. But he never labours them, never dwells on them too long, and certainly never drags them in for the sake of advertising his attainments as a scholar and man of letters. Nor, in the second place, does his learning deserve the depreciatory epithet which Thackeray affixed to it. It is both solid and extensive. His knowledge of the Greek and Latin classics is particularly remarkable, and we have also abundant evidence of his wide reading in more recent literature. Certainly, Fielding is no socialist. In the matter of sound learning, few English novelists have been so well equipped.

"On Fielding's style in general one further remark may be added. A writer in the *Edinburgh*, reviewing Thackeray's *Virginians* in 1859, called attention to a resemblance between Thackeray and Fielding. He wrote :

'There is one point in which Fielding is a model for all times, and in which Thackeray is his worthy disciple, and we venture to think perfectly his equal. That point is, style and beauty of composition......You may open any page of Fielding at random, and read it with pleasure, without reference to the story or context, merely as a piece of exquisite writing. The same may be said of Mr. Thackeray.' No objection can be taken to this observation. But it ought not to be forgotten that, if Thackeray rivalled Fielding in the perfect or very nearly perfect, presentation of the subject matter he was still only following when the older master had led the way. To Fielding belongs the credit of having been the first to give the novel a beautiful literary form". (Dudden).

IX

NATURE IN *TOM JONES*

The story of *Tom Jones* has a topographical setting. Indeed all the predecessors of Fielding lacked this quality. "Hitherto fiction-writers had taken little trouble to indicate the scene of the events related. It is true that Richardson in *Pamela* did make some attempt to supply a background. With a few dexterous strokes he has enabled us to picture Mr. b's lonely and gloomy house in Lincolnshire, with its surrounding elms and pines, its courtyard, its carp-pond, its large garden planted with sunflowers and laid out with walk and alleys, and the door in the wall opening on to a pasture and a common beyond. He has also afforded us glimpses of the grounds of the Bedfordshire mansion—the well-kept garden, 'the pretty canal', the summer house, the cascade. In respect of the localizing of events, however, Fielding made a definite advance. In his first novel, though the places where the various incidents happened are not mentioned, yet the general outline of the journey from London via Basingstoke to East Stour is indicated clearly enough, and the beauty of one spot, which may almost certainly be identified with Compton Chamberlaine, is described. But in *Tom Jones*, the topographical setting is much more carefully and precisely elaborated. Beginning with a detailed account of the site of Allworthy's magnificent house, Fielding allows us to follow the route taken by Tom and Sophia, from Glassonbury and Wells, through Hambrook, Cambridge and Gloucester to Upton-on Severn; thence through Pershore, to Meriden, and finally fron Meriden, though Coventry, Stony Stratford, Dunstable an St. Albans, to London. Several of these towns and villages ar named, and the rest, from the hints supplied in the book ar easily recognisable. Moreover, the several incidents are distinctl assigned to the several places, which serve as their settings. B such localisation of history, by giving it a real geographic background, Fielding brought into fiction a new elemen which has since become one of its established conventions' (Dudden). This topographical description and setting Tom Jones influenced many later novelists.

But inspite of the fact that Fielding has indicated in *Tom Jones* the localities through which the action of the novel moved yet except in very few cases, he has not described any scenery or place' vividly and in a detailed manner. "And partly on this account, he is thought to have been, on the whole indifferent to the impressive phenomena of Nature. This, however, is not quite true. Certainly he did not share that intense delight in the sights and sounds of the external world which characterised his distinguished contemporary, the poet Thomson. Nevertheless, as is evident from incidental references in the novel, he had a keener perception of them, and a deeper appreciation of them than some critics have given him credit for. He was a true lover of country. The rural landscapes pleased him—the sleepy meadows with the browsing sheep, the woods of oaks and beeches and elms, the meandering rivers, and the distant cloud-capped hills. He had a fondness for the little villages clustering about their ancient churchyards, where on Sundays after evensong the rustics were wont to gather. He was capable of being thrilled by the glory of the sunrise on a serene day in May, when the sun, before appearing 'in the full blaze of his majesty', sends forth into the blue firmament streams of light, 'as harbingers preceding his pomp'. He realized also the romantic enchantment of a 'delicious grove' on a June evening, with a gentle breeze rustling the leaves, and the sweet trilling of murmuring stream' mingling delightfully 'with the melodious notes of nightingales; and he knew how the spell would be broken, 'should hoarse thunder burst suddenly through the shattered clouds, and rumbling roll along the sky.' The solemn and melancholy beauty of a lofty hill by moonlight impressed his imagination; as did also the far-reaching prospect which might be viewed from its summit in the fresh glow of the early-morning. Nor was he insensitive to the boisterous play of winds in a forest of tall trees, or to the grand spectacle of the clouds, opening to our vision the wonders and splendours of their variegated mansions, and he appreciated 'the horror with which darkness, rain, and wind fill persons who have lost their way in the night? Particularly was he moved by the loveliness of that rural scenery which was best known to him—'the woods, roves, the lawns of Devon and of Dorset'.

"It is evident that Fielding was by no means indifferent to, as Johnson was indifferent, to the charm of natural scenery. Yet like the majority of eighteenth century contemporaries, he seems to have accorded his admiration less to nature unadorned than to nature improved by art. His ideal was a finely situated, elegantly cultivated estate—Esher, Stowe, Wilton, Eastbury and Prior Park are singled out for special praise—where the deficiencies of nature were supplemented, and the redundances corrected, by the landscape gardener's ingenious operations. It was indeed still too early for the passion for nature in its purity and simplicity—for nature untrimmed and unclipped into conformity with fashionable nations of the 'picturesque'—to find expression in the English novel.

"In *Tom Jones*, then, we find but little in the way of description of outdoor scenery. Of indoor scenery, that is, of details constituting the make-up of interiors, no notice whatever is taken. There is nothing in Fielding comparable with Richardson's exhaustive account of the layout and furnishings of Grandison Hall. There is nothing corresponding with Smollett's picture of the kitchen of the little public-house on the great north-road, with the redbrickfloor, the Windsor chairs, the pewter plates and copper saucepans, and the cheerful fire of sea-coal. No hint is vouchsafed us concerning the *decer* of Allworthy's study, or of Squire Western's dining room, or of the inn kitckhen at Upton, or of Lady Bellaston's London drawing.room (except that the last contained a mirror). Such particulars did not interest Fielding. Also, he confessedly desired that the readers of his story should freely use their imagination; and he doubtless included details of interior set-up among the matters on which their imagination might properly be exercised" (Dudden).

APPENDIX I

A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE PLOT OF THE NOVEL

The novel *Tom Jones* consists of three clearly distinguished parts :

(*i*) The First Part (I. 2—VI. 11) is introductory to the main action, and covers a period of twenty-one years. It furnishes a sketch of the history and development of the three leading personages—*e.g.*, Tom, Blifil, and Sophia—from their earliest childhood until they reached the age of 21, 20, and 19 respectively. The reader is further made acquainted with various characters, who were more or less closely connected with the principal personages, and more or less directly affected their fortunes. These may be sorted into four groups.

(*a*) First comes the Allworthy group, consisting of Mr. Thomas Allworthy, the rich and benevolent owner of one of the largest estates in Somersetshire, and his oddly assorted household. In the squire's bed was discovered, one May evening, a mysterious boy, whom the goodman determined to rear as his own, and who was afterwards named Tom Jones. With Allworthy lived his sister Bridget—a hypocritical prude of between thirty and forty, singularly destitute of personal charms. 'She was of that species of woman', says Fielding about her, 'whom you commend rather for good qualities than beauty, and who are generally called, by their own sex, very good sort of women—as good sort of woman, madam, as you wish to know. Indeed she was so far from regretting want of beauty, that she never mentioned that perfection, if it can be called one, without contempt ; and would often thank God she was not as handsome as Miss Such-a-one, whom perhaps beauty had led into errors, which she might have otherwise avoided.' Thus though she was not beautiful, yet her wealth, however, attracted a fortune-hunting captain of dragoons on

half-pay, named John Blifil, who married her, quarrelled with her incessantly for two years, but at last made her amends by dying suddenly of an apoplexy. Meanwhile eight months after the marriage, Bridget Allworthy gave birth to Young Blifil, destined to be the villain of the story. The two boys, Tom and Blifil, grew up together under Allworthy's protection. Their education was conducted by an ultra-orthodox divine, the Reverend Roger Thwackum, a strong believer in Solomon's method of bringing up the young; and was also supervised by an extremely unorthodox philosopher, Mr. Thomas Square, who like Thwackum, resided under Allworthy's roof.

(*b*) In the village, a mile distant from Allworthy's mansion, dwelt the Segrim family, consisting of Black George the gamekeeper—so named from his huge black beard—his wife and his five children. The gamekeeper was a shifty fellow, whose notions concerning 'the difference between *meum* and *teum*' were unconventional. His second child was a strikingly handsome, but 'bold and forward' girl named Molly; and with her Tom, when he was about nineteen, commenced an intrigue. At the time of this affair, Molly, though nearly three years younger than Tom, was not so innocent and inexperienced as she led her lover to believe.

(*c*) Thirdly, we have the Western group. Upwards of three miles from Mr. Allworthy's house was the abode of a well-to-do, sporting squire, named Western, whose manor was contiguous to the Allworthy estate. This gentleman, who was a widower, had an only child, Sophia, whom he loved very nearly as much as he loved his dogs and horses." Mr. Western grew every day fonder and fonder of Sophia, in so much that his beloved dogs themselves almost gave place to her in his affections; but, as he could not prevail on himself to abandon these, he contrived very cunningly to enjoy their company, together with that of his daughter, by insisting on her riding a-hunting with him." The girl for some three years had been away from home, in the charge of a maiden aunt, who was an authority on the manners and customs of the polite world. but at the age of seventeen, she had returned to preside over her father's house. She was waited on by a pert and loquacious maid, named Honour Blackmore. .The worldly wise aunt Mrs. 'Di' Western, came sometimes to stay with her brother and

niece. A tall, manlike, very strong-minded lady, she provided herself on her knowledge and understanding of politics ; and was apt to fly into furious rages, when her language could hardly be equalled in 'the regions of Billingsgate.' Fielding writes about her : 'She had lived about the court, and had seen the world. Hence she had acquired all that knowledge which the said world usually communicates ; and was a prefect mistress of manners, customs, ceremonies, and fashions. Nor did her erudition stop here. She had considerably improved her mind by study ; she had not only read all the modern plays, operas, oratories, poems, and romances—in all which she was a critic, but had gone through Rapin's History of England, Eachard's Roman History, and many French *Memoires Pour servirSa l' Histoire* : to these she had added most of the political pamphlets. and journals published within the last twenty years. From which she had attained a very competent skill in politics, and could discourse very learnedly on the affairs of Europe......" A frequent guest at Western's house was Parson Supple, curate of the parish—a worthy, easy going man, 'with one of the best appetites in the world ; who patiently tolerated his host's grossness and profanity for the sake of the good fare at his table.'

(*d*) Fourthly, we have the Partridge group. In the village of Little Baddington, fifteen miles from Allworthy's house, lived Benjamin Partridge, the oddly humorous school master, clerk, barber, and his jealous and shrewish wife Anne. They had a servant a plain but 'extremely intelligent girl named Jenny Jones : but Mr. Partridge had dismissed her in a fit of jealousy, and she had returned to her home in Allworthy's parish. Soon afterwards she was summoned to the Hall to nurse Miss Bridget through an illness. When the unknown infant was found in Allworthy's bed, Jenny was accused of having placed it there, and confessed the fact. Partridge, the girl's former master, was then suspected of being the father. He stoutly protested his innocence ; but since his own wife testified against him, he was not believed. Eventually Mrs. Partridge having died of the smallpox, and he himself having fallen into distressed circumstances, he left the district, Jenny also disappeared—in company with a recruiting officer.

There is one other character, outside of the above-mentioned groups. This is Mr. Dowling, the Salisbury Attorney, always in a hurry of business, who brought to Allworthy's house the news of Mrs. Blifil's sudden death at Salisbury, and delivered to Blifil (Allworthy himself being ill and unable to receive him) her last letter, which revealed the secret of Jone's birth.

In this Introductory part we are first given an account of the events relating to the discovery of the infant Tom and to the birth of Blifil. The narrative is then suspended for a period of twelve years. When the story is resumed, illustrations are afforded of the characters of the two boys—of the reckless good nature of Tom and the malicious hypocrisy of Blifil—and the manner of their education by Thwackum and Square is described. In due course, as the lads grow to manhood, we hear of Tom's intrigue with Molly Segrim, and of the gradual development of love between him and Sophia. Finally, there is a report of the series of incidents which resulted in the following situation. Tom has fallen in love with Sophia. Again there is a quarrel between Tom and Blifil and this thing is reported to Allworthy, who on the saying of Thwackum and Square that Tom's behaviour is not good casts him out of his home with a parting gift of five £100 bank-bills; Sophia, on the other hand, who was in love with Tom comes to know the firm resolve of her father, Squire Western. Squire Western had determined to marry her with Blifil and in case she does not agree with that he will cast her out without a single penny. At last he thinks that he should marry Sophia with Blifil as soon as possible and so decides a forced marriage. Blifil, the arch-hypocrite, in love only with himself, is well satisfied with the success of his artful manoeuvres to effect Tom's expulsion, and with the prospect of obtaining speedy possession of the beautiful young heiress. Such is the position of affairs at the end of the Introduction.

(ii) The Second Part (VI, 12—XII. 14) relates the separate adventures of Tom and Sophia, from their departure from their respective homes in the country to their arrival in London. The action takes place over a period of ten days. The central point in the narrative is the eventful night at Upton-on-Severn. Before this Sophia pursues Tom; after it Tom pursues Sophia. In this section many new characters are introduced. But—if

we omit Mrs. Waters—who eventually proves to be identical with Jenny Jones, the only new figures of the importance are the handsome scoundrel Ensign Northerton, Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick, an impulsive Irish gentleman of jealous temper, and his pretty and giddy wife Harriet, Sophia's cousin. The story is interrupted by two long digressions—the narrative of the Man of the Hill, and that of Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

The Second Part has been written in exact accordance with a carefully thought out place-scheme and time-scheme. Very precise details are given concerning the route taken by the travellers, and also concerning the time spent in accomplishing the several stages of the journey. Thus, when once it has been ascertained from what locality the lovers started, and at what dates they respectively commenced their wanderings; it is possible to follow their movements from place to place, from day to day, and indeed from hour to hour, upto their arrival at their destination in London.

(*a*) As to the point of departure, Tom set forth from Mr. Allworthy's house, and Sophia from Squire Western's. But since these houses were only about three miles apart, the young people started their travels from approximately the same locality. Nor is it difficult to identify the neighbourhood which Fielding had in mind.

Allworthy's house was in Somersetshire, and we are given a fairly full description of it and its surroundings. 'It was an imposing mansion in the Gothic style—as commodious within as venerable without'—occupying a sheltered position on the south-east side of a hill, which rose gently upwards behind it for nearly half-a-mile. The upper part of this hill was covered with a grove of old oaks, in the midst of which was a fine lawn, sloping down towards the house. Near the summit was a spring, gushing out of a rock covered with firs; and from the spring a plentiful stream of water fell in a natural cascade of about thirty feet, and then ran off in a pebbly channel, with many lesser falls, till it finally merged in a lake at the foot of the hill, about a quarter of a mile below the mansion. From the terrace in front of the house a wonderful view could be obtained.

'Out of this lake, which filled the centre of a beautiful

plain embellished with groups of beeches and elms, and fed with sheep, issued a river, that for several miles was seen to meander through an amazing variety of meadows and woods till it emptied itself into the sea, with a large arm of which, and an island beyond it, the prospect was closed. On the right of this valley opened another of less extent, adorned with several villages, and terminated by one of the towers of an old ruined abbey, grown over with ivy, and part of the front, which remained still entire. The left-hand scene presented the view of a very fine park composed of very unequal ground, and agreeably varied with all the diversity that hills, lawns, wood and water, laid out with admirable taste, but owing less to art than to nature, could give. Beyond this, the country gradually rose into a ridge of wild mountains, the tops of which were above the mountains.' (*Tom Jones* I. 4)

Now just as Fielding in his description of Allworthy undoubtedly portrayed Ralph Allen, so in his description of Allworthy's grand house on the hill-side, with its lawn, and cascade, and lake and beautifully laid out grounds he was undoubtedly thinking of Prior Park, which he enthusiastically praised later on in the novel. In two particulars, however, his description is at variance with the facts. First, Prior Park was a Palladian building; whereas Fielding, who seems to have been an admirer of Gothic architecture—perhaps made under the influence of his friend Sanderson Miller.—made Allworthy's mansion Gothic. Secondly, the view from Prior Park, beautiful and extensive though it was, certainly did not correspond with that which is described so minutely in the book. On the other hand, the scene there pictured does tally in every detail with the prospect observable from the summit of Tor Hill. near Glastonbury—a spot which Fielding must frequently have visited when staying with his Gould relations at Sharpham Park. From this height, on a clear morning, he would really have beheld the fertile plain, with its meadows, woods, and scattered villages, the meandering river (the Brue), the sea (the Briston channel), the island (Stert Island in Bridgwater Bay), the old ruined abbey' (Glastonbury), and 'the ridge of wild mountains (the Mendips and Quantocks) with clouds trailing across them—in short, the entire landscape exhibited in the description. We are thus led to the conclusion

that the account of Allworthy's seat is compounded of fact and fancy. Fielding pictured Pride Park, but he altered the style of the architecture from Palladian to Gothic, and transferred the site from Combe Down, Bath, to Tor Hill, Glastonbury.

For our present purpose, the important thing to notice is that Tom and Sophia are conceived as having their homes in, and so starting their travels from, the neighbourhood of Glastonbury. The narrative of earlier stages of those travels exactly agrees with this conclusion.

(*b*) As to the date of Tom's departure—from which when discovered, we are able to date the later departure of Sophia—the text affords two significant indications.

First, very late in the day following his expulsion from Allworthy's house, Tom encountered at Hambrook a body of soldiers, who were on their way to join the army of the Duke of Cumberland against the Young Pretender and his Highlanders. 'This', it is explained, 'was the very time when the late rebellion was at the highest ; and indeed the banditti were now marched into England, intending as it was thought, to fight the king's forces, and to attempt pushing forward to the metropolis'. Now, Prince Charles crossed the Border on 8 November 1745, and made his triumphal entry into Carlish on 17 November. Thence he marched southwards on London, reaching Priston on 26 November and Manchester on 29 November. Meanwhile, the Duke of Cumberland arrived at Lichfield on 28 November, to oppose the progress of the rebels. It seems pretty clear, then, that Tom's meeting with the red coats at Hambrook must be placed in the latter half of the month of November, 1745.

Secondly, five days after that on which he left his home, Tom quitted the city of Gloucester at 5 o'clock in the evening. We are further informed that, at this hour winter Night 'would have drawn her sable curtain over the universe, had not the moon forbid her, how now, with a face as broad and as red as those of some jolly mortals, who like her turn night into day, began to rise from her bed, where she had slumbered away the day, in order to sit up all night'. This is of course merely a roundabout way of saying that there was a full moon. Now, in 1745, the moon was at the full at 1 a.m. on

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28 November ; and on 29 November, she rose at Gloucester at 4·58 p.m., that is roughly as 5 o'clock. Tom, therefore, quitted Gloucester on the evening of 29 November, which would be reckoned a night of the fullmoon. In passing, it may be noted that Fielding seems actually to have consulted an almanac of 1745 that he might be correct in his statement of even so trifling a detail as the state of the moon on a given November evening—an astonishing evidence of his passion for accuracy.

But, if Tom was at Gloucester on 29 November, and if (as is clearly indicated) this was five days after his dismissal by Allworthy, it follows that the day on which he was cast out of his home was 24 November 1745. Taking this as the starting point in time, we find no difficulty in dating the events of his journey, and also those of Sophia's. Of the travel narrative the following is a summary :

24 November, 1745. Tom was dismissed by Allworthy after dinner *i.e.*, early in the afternoon. At a brook, about a mile from the house, he dropped his pocket book (containing bank-bills for £ 500), which was found and kept by Black George. He proceeded to a town 'about five miles away', where, it seems, Black George, brought him 16 guineas from Sophia. This town was evidently Wells, five or six miles from Glastonbury.

25 November. Having passed the night at Wells, Tom hired horses and a guide, and set out for Bristol, intending 'to seek his fortune at sea'. But the guide missed the way, and at nightfall they found themselves at Hambrook—a village few miles north-east of Bristol, and about thirty miles from Glastonbury. Here Tom met the soldiers who were marching to the war, and decided to join them as a volunteer.

26 November. Tom marched with the soldiers to their next halting place, which though, unnamed, may be identified with the village of Cambridge, 24 miles from Bristol, and 10 miles from Gloucester. Here he dined with the officers at an inn, was wounded in the head by Ensign Northerton, and was carried to bed. Northerton was arrested, but escaped during the night.

27 November. The soldiers left early for Worcester ; but Tom remained in bed till 5 p. m. He then got up, dined, and made

acquaintance with Partridge, who was practising at this place as a barber—surgeon.

28 November. Tom spent the day quietly, completing his cure. Partridge asked and received, permission to attend him to the war as his servant.

29 November. (*a*) In the morning Tom and Partridge walked to Gloucester, where they dined at 'The Bell'. At 5 p.m. they set off for Worcester, but, coming to a fork, took by mistake the Ledbury road. Late in the evening they arrived at the foot of a very steep hill. Fielding names it 'Mazard Hill', and states that its summit afforded 'one of the most prospects in the world, and also that nearest town to it was Upton-on Severn. He may have had in mind one of the southern Malverns; but it is hard to see how this could be described as near to Upton. Perhaps the hill is imaginary. Tom rescued an accentric hermit ('The Man of the Hill') from robbers, and spent the night in his cottage.

(*b*) Meanwhile, near Glastonbury, Sophia, threatened with an immediate marriage with Blifil, had made arrangements to run away, and take refuse with Lady Bellaston, a relation living in London. She stole out of her father's house precisely at midnight, taking with her a £100 bank-bill, and rode to a town about five miles distant (*i.e.* Wells).

30 November. (*a*) At daybreak Tom climbed the Mazard, and rescued a woman—a Mrs. Waters—from the murderous violence of Ensign Notherton. He then conducted the lady to Upton, where 'they went directly to that inn which in their eyes presented the fairest apperance to the street.' This 'house of exceeding good repute' was doubtless 'The White Lion'. Here Tom dined with the lady and subsequently having fallen the victim to her wiles, passed the night with her. Meanwhile other travellers of importance in the story arrived at the inn—first before dinner, Mrs. Harriet Fitzpatrick, a pretty young woman of twenty-three, who was running away from her husband; next, at midnight, Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick, who was posting in pursuit of his wife; and lastly between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning Sophia herself.

(*b*) When Sophia reached Wells in the very early hours, she hired horses and a guide to take her to London; but to

evade her pursuers, she decided to proceed thither, not by the direct road, but by way of Bristol. Having received news of Tom from the guide, however, she determined to follow her lover. She reached Hambrook at daybreak, and thence pressed on via Cambridge to Gloucester, where she took some tea, and rested for two hours. About 11 p.m., she left Gloucester and, following the Worcester road, arrived at the inn at Upton in less than four hours. She had been in the saddle, with only a few brief intervals of rest, for some twenty-six hours.

(*c*) At breakfast on this day Squire Western discovered that his daughter had fled, and at once started in pursuit, tracing her from place to place with little difficulty.

1 December. (*a*) Sophia, having learnt that Tom was with Mrs Waters, bribed Susan the chamber maid to place her muff in his empty bed. She then ordered out her horses, and left the inn soon after 5 a.m. After crossing the Severn, she was overtaken by Mrs. Fitzpatrick, whom she recognised as her cousin Harriet. In pulling her handkerchief from her pocket, she dropped her pocket-book containing the £100 bank-bill. Riding on together, the ladies came to a crossway, where roads branched to Worchester and to Pershore. Taking the Pershore road they passed Defford Common and Pershore, pushed on swiftly' along cross country roads running northward and at last emerged on 'a wide and well beaten road'—evidently the post-road from Chester to London. Turning to the right along this highway, they soon reached 'a very fair promising inn, six miles northwest of Coventry. This was doubtless the famous 'Bull's Head,' in the village of Meriden. Here they alighted at 10 a.m., and Sophia, who was worn out, went straight to bed. Very late in the evening, an Irish peer, a friend of Mrs. Fitzpatrick's travelling from Chester to London, arrived at the inn, and afforded to convey the ladies to town (a distance of 99 miles) in his coach and six.

(*b*) At Upton, two hours after Sophia's departure, *i.e.* about 7 a.m., when 'it was yet scarcely day light', Squire Western burst into 'The White Lion', and caused a great disturbance. Convinced at last that his daughter was not there, he spurred off over the Severn, but, at the crossway mentioned above, he made the mistake of taking the road to Worcester instead of that to Pershore. Happening to meet a hunt, he joined in

the sport, and afterwards dined with the master and slept that night at his house. Next morning he returned to Somersetshire.

(*c*) Tom, driven almost to distraction by the discovery of Sophia's muff in his room, abandoned his intention of going to the war, and resolved to pursue the lady. Unable to procure horses, he started from Upton on foot, about three hours after Sophia's departure. Luckily he took the Peshore road; after which he was guided on his journey, partly by a lamebeggar who had found, and sold to him, Sophia's lost pocketbook, and partly by the hoof prints of Sophia's horses, which he was able to trace for several miles. At Defford Common, however, he lost the tracks. Here, there were several roads. Not knowing which to take, Tom crossed the Common, and, as it was now almost dark, turned in at an alehouse, where he witnessed a puppetshow and spent the night.

2 December. (*a*) At 7 a.m. Sophia (who now first discovered the loss of her pocketbook) and Mrs. Fitzpatrick set out with the peer for London, travelling on the direct road through Coventry, Daventry, Stony, Stratford, Dunstable, St. Albans, and Barnet. They accomplished the journey in two days, reaching town on the evening of 3 December. The ladies repaired a lodging.

3 December. At Coventry, Tom hired post-horses, and soon after 2 a.m. was again in the saddle. Keeping the main road, he passed through Daventry, Stony, Stratford, and Dunstable, to St. Albans where he had hoped to overtake Sophia, but missed her by two hours. With fresh post-horses, he rode on to Barnet, through which he passed at dusk. Within a mile of Highgate he had an adventure with an amateur highway man. He entered London through Grays Inn Lane, and, after, a fruitless attempt to discover, the Irish peer's address, put up for the night (it being then part 11 p.m.) at The Bull and Gate' in Holborn.

Throughout this account it is interesting to notice the extreme precision with which the chief incidents are timed. The headings of the various books indicate more or less generally the number of days or half-days assigned to the successive stages of the journey; the text further particularizes the day, and often the very hour, of every important movement of either of the leading personages.

Again we are given every exact information concerning the route taken by the lovers – from Glastonbury northward to Gloucester and Upton-on-Severn, then through Pershore eastward and northward to Meridan and finally southward from Meridan and Coventry to London ; and it seems certain that with a great part, at any rate, of this route Fielding was personally familiar. He speaks of the good or bad quality of some of the roads ; mentions points on them where a traveller (there being as yet no signposts) might easily go wrong ; specifies the distances between various places ; and indicates the times which a horseman would take to cover those distances. Evidently he had ridden over many of these roads himself. Further, he gives the impression of being personally acquainted with several of the hostelries along the route—the inn at Wells ; the public house at Hambrook, with its hole of a parlour ; the inn at Cambridge 'frequented by people of fashion' ; 'the excellent Bell', at Gloucester which (he says) 'I do most seriously recommend to every reader who shall visit this ancient city' ; the 'White Lion' at Upton, with its comfortable kitchen and numerous apartments ; the well-looking 'Bull's Head' at Meriden ; and the inns at Coventry and St. Albans. He even mentions the names of rooms in two of the above-mentioned houses—the 'Sun', as the sunless dungeon-parlour of the inn at Cambridge was ironically designated, and 'the Wild-goose' and the 'Rose' at Upton. It is tempting also to conjecture that some of the vivid sketches of the landlords and landladies of these inns—apart from the Whitefields of Gloucester, who were certainly drawn from the life—are imaginatively rendered portraits of real hosts and hostesses, whom he had encountered in the course of his travels through the country. The part of the route which is described in fullest detail is that between Wells and Upton-on-Severn ; and, this, no doubt, had several times been traversed by Fielding, when, after, riding the Western Circuit, he went to stay with his friend Lyttleton at Hagby Park in Worcestershire. With the last section of the route, the Coventry—London post-road, he seems also to have been familiar.

(iii) The Third Part (XIII. 2—XVIII. 13) relates the adventures of Tom and Sophia in London. The scene, for the most part, is laid in that 'very good part of the town' which

included Bond Street, Hanover Square, Piccadilly, the Haymarket, and Pall Mall. Several new characters are introduced—Lady Bellaston, an unappetizing, middle-aged, artfully bedizened woman of quality, not by 'any means of the vestal kind'; Lord Fellemar, who though fundamentally a man of honour, could be goaded by a woman's ridicule into attempting a most dishonourable action'; simple, warmhearted Mrs. Miller, with 'a tongue always ready for the service of her friends'; her two daughters Nancy and Betty, aged seventeen and ten respectively; little Jack Nightingale, who affected the looseness of a lady killer and town-fop, but 'was meant by nature for a much better character'; Jack's tough old father and uncle; and the ceremonious Captain Egglane. The period covered is rather less than a month—from 4 December. But events of the next two days are confusedly lumped together, instead of being assigned, with the precision hitherto observed, to particular days. The chief happenings on 28 December, however, are clearly indicated.

The dates of the principal incidents in this Third Part of the novel are as follows:

4 December. Sophia (morning) went to Lady Bellaston's. Tom (morning) traced Sophia to Mrs. Fitzpatrick's lodging, but missed her by ten minutes. Tom (evening) interviewed Mrs. Fitzpatrick, who professed ignorance of Sophia's address. Patridge engaged lodgings for Tom and himself at Mrs. Miller's house in Bond Street.

5 December. Mrs. Fitzpatrick (early morning) called on Lady Bellaston, to discuss Sophia's affair. Tom (5. p.m) called on Mrs. Fitzpatrick, and was introduced to Lady Bellaston, who was struck by his good looks.

6 December. Tom, in the anxiety to obtain Sophia's address, called six times on Mrs. Fitzpatrick, but was not admitted. He made acquaintance (evening) with Jack Nightingale, who lodged at Mrs. Miller's, and had won the affection of her daughter Nancy.

7 December. Tom attended a masquerade at Opera-house, met Lady Bellaston, and accompanied her to a house near Hanover Square. He remained with her from 2 to 6 a.m. on the following morning, and accepted from her a gift of £ 50.

8-14 December. Tom continued his liaison with Lady Bellaston, and received many presents from her, but could not extract from her any information about Sophia.

15 December. Tom (7 p.m.) at Lady Bellaston's house. had an unexpected meeting with Sophia, who had returned early from the theatre, where she had been alarmed by a riot. The same evening (10 p.m.) Lady Bellaston called on Tom at his lodging ; and soon afterwards came Sophia's maid Honour, bringing a letter from her young mistress. During the latter's visit Lady Bellaston remained concealed behind the bed-curtains she stayed on till 2 a.m.

16 December. Lord Fellamar, who had rescued Sophia from the theatre-riot, and had been deeply smitten by her charms, called (morning) to inquire after her, and remained for two hours. As he was leaving, he was intercepted by the servants and conducted to Lady Bellaston. This woman, desiring to place Sophia, for ever beyond Tom's reach, that she might keep the latter for herself, advised the peer to compel the girl to marry him by 'violent methods'. That evening after dinner and whilst, they concerted an infamous plot. Meanwhile in Somershire, Mrs. Western received (after-noon) a letter from Mrs. Fitzpatrick, disclosing to recover his daughter. Tom remained all day in his lodging, feigning sickness, to avoid a visit to Lady Bellaston.

17 December. Tom (11 a.m.) learning that Nightingale had deserted Nancy whom he had reduced, sought him out in his new lodging in Pall Mall and persuaded him to do what was right by the girl. Lord Fellamar, having been rallied by Lady Bellaston out of his honourable scruples (morning), prepared to execute his scheme. He called on Sophia (7 p.m.) and was about to offer her violence, when Squire Western suddenly burst in, insulted the peer, and carried off his daughter to his lodging in Piccadilly, where he locked her up in her room. Later in the evening Lady Bellaston visited Tom, and, after an embarrassing interview, discovered Honour hidden behind the bed-curtains.

18 December. Nightingale (morning) married Nancy at Doctors' Commons. Tom resolved to break with Lady Bellaston, and (on Nightingales' suggestion) used the foolish

devise of sending her a letter containing a proposal of marriage (which he knew she would reject). Lord Fellamar (afternoon) visited Lady Bellaston, who encouraged him still to hope for Sophia, and advised him to get Tom pressed and sent to sea, he being (she declared), 'a beggar and a vagabond', though passing for a gentleman. Tom (evening) received, and refused, an offer of marriage from Mrs. Arabella Hunt.

19 **December**. Squire Western (breakfast time), being interviewed and struck by Captain Egglane, did not behave heroically. Mrs. Western (evening), having just arrived in town, visited her brother, released Sophia from her locked chamber, and took her away to her own lodging. This day Tom moved into new rooms in Pall Mall.

20 **December.** This morning (or possibly late on the preceding evening) Lady Bellaston visited Mrs. Western, to enlist her support for the match between Fellamar and Sophia, with the object of finally crushing Tom's hopes, she gave Mrs. Western his foolish letter to herself proposing marriage, and accorded her permission to show it to Sophia.

21 **December**. Tom took Partridge and Mrs. Miller to see Garrick in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and was invited by Mrs. Fitzpatrick to call on her the next afternoon. Allworthy and Blifil arrived (evening) at Mrs. Miller's.

22 **December**. Blifil waited on Squire Western (morning), and was taken by him to call on Mrs. Western, who, being intent on marrying Sophia to Fellamar, received him coldly. Squire Western (afternoon), at a family gathering, refused his consent to a marriage with Fellamar. Tom (afternoon) called on Mrs. Fitzpatrick, and, on leaving her lodging, was met by Mr. Fitzpatrick, who had arrived from Bath in search of his wife. Tom, having been struck by the other, was forced to fight a duel, in which he dangerously wounded his assailant. Immediately afterwards, he was seized by the press-gang, who were lying in wait for him, handed over to a constable, and committed to the Gatehouse, until it should be known whether Fitzpatrick's wound would prove fatal.

23 **December**. Partridge (soon after midday) brought Tom a letter from Sophia, who having been shown the unfortunate Bellaston letter, indignantly cast off her seemingly faith-

less lover. Nightingale and Mrs. Miller arrived at the Gatehouse a little later. The former undertook to discover, if possible, witness of the duel, who would testify that Fitzpatrick had struck the first blow. Mrs. Miller undertook to convey a letter from Tom to Sophia, and executed the commission that evening.

24 December. Sophia rejected the formal proposal of Lord Fellamar, thereby incurring the fury of her aunt, who declared her resolve to take her back to her father next morning. Tom passed the day at the Gatehouse in great dejection.

25 December. This was a dreadful day for Tom. First Nightingale brought him news that he had found two of the press-gang, who had witnessed the duel, drinking with a third person (who proved to be the lawyer, Dowling) in a 'hedge-tavern near Aldersgate', and that both were prepared to 'swear that Tom had struck the first blow'. If Fitzpatrick died, this evidence would bring Tom into extreme jeopardy. Next Mrs. Miller reported that she had not been successful in softening Sophia. Lastly, to Tom's great surprise, appeared Mrs. Waters (the lady of the night at Upton), who had been living with Fitzpatrick as his mistress. She brought the good news that the wounded man was recovering but there followed an appalling disclosure. For Partridge, who had missed seeing the lady at Upton, now recognised her at that very Jenny Jones who has believed to be Tom's own mother. The horror of this discovery made Tom nearly frantic. Meanwhile, on this day Sophia returned to her father's lodging.

26-27 December. The events of these two days have not been carefully distributed. Fielding was evidently in a hurry to finish his book, and neglected to give the usual exact attention to his time scheme. Thus he connected together events which were clearly spread out over two, or perhaps, over two and a half days, making it appear as though the whole series had occurred on a single day. In these circumstances, the only thing to do is to ignore the connecting words which link up the events with one another in the text, and simply enumerate the chief events which happened during this period, and which led to a complete reversal of Mr. Allworthy's attitude toward Blifil and Tom respectively.

The main events are three. Allworthy received letters from Thwackum and Square which disposed him to believe that he had judged Tom too harshly. He discovered by chance Black George's theft of Tom's pocket-book with the £500. He was visited by Nightingale, who cleared Tom of all blame in respect of the duel, and told how he had met Dowling in company with the press-gang men. After this Allworthy had three important interviews. The first was with Partridge, who persisted in his denial that he was Tom's father. The second was with Mrs. Waters, who revealed to him the secret of Tom's birth—that he was the son of Allworthy's sister Bridget by a youngman named Summer, who had died prematurely of small-pox. The third was with Dowling, who confirmed the truth about Tom's origin, alleging that he had himself delivered to Blifil a letter in which Bridget, dying at Salisbury had confessed the fact (which letter Blifil had suppressed). Dowling further admitted that, on Blifil's instructions, he had offered Mrs. Waters financial help for a prosecution of Tom for the murder of Fitzpatrick, and had also tempered—though very discreetly—with the witness of the duel. From all this Allworthy concluded that 'Blifil was the worst of villains' and that Tom had been cruelly wronged.

28 December. It was probably on the morning of this day (though the text here is confused) that Allworthy visited Sophia, and begged her to compensate Tom for his sufferings by accepting her for her husband. But the girl (who could not forgive the Bellastom episode) declined to consider the proposal. Nor did Mrs. Miller, who had also called on her, and explained how the offer of marriage to Lady Bellaston came to be made, succeeded in shaking her resolution.

On whatever date these two interviews took place, the following events certainly occurred on 28 December. Tom (morning) was discharged from the Gatehouse, Fitzpatrick having been certified to be out of danger. Proceeding to Mrs. Miller's, he had a tender reconciliation with Allworthy, and renewed his friendship with Western, who impetuously came to see him. He was then commissioned by Allworthy to dismiss Blifil; which he did with more kindness than the scoundrel deserved. Finally, (afternoon) he and Allworthy took tea with Sophia. In the private interview which followed

he succeeded in convincing Sophia of his true repentance for his past misconduct, and in persuading her to consent to marry him after all.

29 December. Tom and Sophia (morning) were married privately at Doctor's Commons.

31 December. The married pair, with Allworthy and Western, set out for Somersetshire.

In this long and crucial narrative, the crucial dates are 7 December (when Tom met Lady Bellaston at the masquerade), 15 December (when Tom found Sophia in Lady Bellaston's house), 17 December (when Sophia was threatened with violence by Lord Fellamer, but was rescued by her father), 22 December (Tom's duel with Fitzpatrick and his incarceration in the Gatehouse), 25 December (when Tom's misery reached its climax), and 28 December (Tom's discharge from the Gatehouse, reconciliation with Allworthy, and acceptance by Sophia). Once more we admire the exact timing of events, which throughout this part, as throughout part II, is carried on so artfully that it may easily escape the notice of the casual reader, but which—except for the days 26 and 27 December, when the incidents are roughly grouped together—is found, on closer examination, to have been most carefully observed from first to last.

[*Adapted*]

APPENDIX II

FIELDING'S OTHER NOVELS

Joseph Andrews

The novel is divisible into three unequal parts. Past I (I. 1-10) is introductory. Part II (I. 11—III. 13) contains the epic of the road. Part III (IV. 1—16) recounts the events which took place after the journey and brings the story to a happy conclusion.

(*a*) **Part I.** In this section we are intrcduced to the principal characters in the book—*Joseph Andrews*, brother of the famous Pamela, and servant of Sir Thomas Booby ; Lady Booby, whom Joseph attends as footman ; Mr. Abraham Adams, curate of the parish in which Sir Thomas's country seat is situated ; Mrs. Slipslop, Lady Booby's 'waiting gentlewoman' ; and Mr. Peter Pounce, the usurious steward. As to the events, Joseph had accompanied the family to town, where Sir Thomas suddenly died. On the seventh day after the death the widow, to relieve the tedium of her mourning retirement, made two artful but unsuccessful attempts to corrupt the virtue of her young footman, whose good looks had made a deep impression on her. Intensely mortified by his failure to respond to her advances, she ordered her steward to pay him his wages, and dismiss him that very evening from her service.

(*b*) **Part II.** This section presents a record of Joseph's journey from London to an unnamed village in the country, where Booby Hall was located, and where—as we are now for the first time informed—there lived, in one of the farms, a beautiful girl of eighteen, named Fanny Goodwill, whom Joseph loved and hoped to marry.

The journey of *Joseph Andrews* is supposed to have taken place in the month of October, when the weather was showery and the nights were cold. The time spent on it—if the evening

on which the journey was commenced be counted as the first day—was exactly eleven days. On two of these days (when Joseph was laid up at 'The Dragon') no event occurred; the rest are marked by incidents often of a surprising character. The time scheme has been carefully worked out; the different days on which the principal incidents occurred, and frequently even the exact times in the days, being accurately distinguished. This elaborate timing of a story was a characteristic of Fielding's method.

The following is the outline of the epic on the road:

The First Day (Wednesday). Joseph sets out from Lady Booby's town house at 7 p.m.; walks briskly by moonlight to 'The Lion' (at Stairs), which he reaches before 11 p.m.; and thence rides, on a horse lent by a friendly groom, to an inn twenty miles distant (at Hartley Row).

The Second Day (Thursday). He reaches the inn about 2 p.m., and, without resting, starts afoot (for Basingstoke, nine miles off). After tramping for two miles he encounters two thieves, who beat him, strip him, and leave him senseless in the ditch. Some while later he is picked up by the (Exeter) stage-coach, and conveyed to 'the Dragon' (at Basingstoke). There he is visited by a surgeon, and (his condition being reported grave) receives ghostly admonition from Parson Barnabas.

At dusk Parson Adams, on his way upto London to sell nine manuscript volumes of sermons, arrives on horseback at the inn, and discovers Joseph.

Meanwhile Lady Booby in London passes the day in great agitation. She resolves to return to her home in the country, and arranged to send on first Mrs. Slipslop, and then Mr. Pounce, to prepare Booby Hall for her reception.

The Third Day (Friday). Joseph being too bruised to resume his journey for some days, Adams remains with him at the inn. Adams holds spiritual discourse with Parson Barnabas over a boron of punch.

The Fourth and Fifth Days (Saturday and Sunday) are uneventful.

The Sixth Day (Monday). Joseph being nearly recovered, it is decided that he and Adams shall set out on the morrow—

Joseph for Salisbury, Adams for London. In the evening, Adams has a discouraging conversation with a 'fat, fair' bookseller, and quarrels with Parson Barnabas, on a question of theology.

The Seventh Day (Tuesday). Adams discovers that his sermons have unhappily been left behind, and so decides to return home with Joseph, instead of proceeding to London. He arranges to share his horse with Joseph, according to the method of 'ride and tie'. He himself sets forth afoot along Salisbury road, leaving Joseph to follow on horse-back. He forgets, however, to pay the twelve shillings due for the keep of the horse, which is accordingly detained by the landlord. Joseph, at a loss, what to do, is relieved from his difficulty by Mrs. Slipslop, who, having, been sent forward into the country by Lady Booby, opportunely arrives at 'The Dragon' in the stage coach, and discharges the bill for the horse. The coach, with Slipslop, then proceeds towards Salisbury, and Joseph rides before it. They come up with Adams at a wayside alehouse, where the Parson has been discussing religion with his host. Adams is then given a vacant seat in the coach; Joseph rides, but has a fall from his horse and hurts his leg.

The party stops to dine at an unnamed inn, where occurs a fight between Adams and the surly landlord, in which Slipslop and the landlady join. When the journey is resumed, Joseph (who has been lamed by his fall) is taken into the coach; while Adams, completely forgetting his horse, strides on ahead. He takes a wrong turning, however, and looses himself on the Wiltshire downs. Some remarkable episodes follow:

(*a*) Adam's encounter, and conversation, with the braggart sportsman, in the afternoon.

(*b*) Adam's rescue, at nightfall, of a distressed damsel. She proves to be Joseph's sweetheart, Fanny Goodwill, who, having heard that her lover was lying ill at Basingstoke, had instantly set out from her village to join him, and had been attacked by a ruffian on the way.

(*c*) The arrest of Adams and Fanny by a 'bird-batting' party, on the false information of the said ruffian.

(*d*) The examination of Adams, later in the evening, by the fox-hunting justice, who in the end dismisses the case.

The Eight Day (Wednesday). About 1 a.m. Adams and Fanny set out, with a guide, to Salisbury. After walking a mile, however, they are forced by a violent storm to take shelter in an alehouse. Here they discover Joseph and Mrs. Slipslop, who had quitted the stage-coach and were proceeding home by chaise. Slipslop is rude to Fanny and insults Adams, and on the occasion of the storm, goes off alone in the chaise, Joseph refusing to be parted from his friends. The three sit up for the rest of the night over the kitchen fire.

Some hours after sunrise they are ready to take the road, but find that they have between them only six pence, half penny where with to settle a bill of seven shillings. Adams applies unsuccessfully to Parson Tulliber for assistance. Eventually he is extricated from this embarrassing situation by a poor pedlar, who lends him six and half pence.

Adams and his companions walk about two miles to another alehouse, where they meet a plausible deceiver, who offers to lend them horses for the last forty miles of their journey. They sleep this night at the alehouse.

The Ninth Day (Thursday). Though they rise very early, their departure is delayed owing to the treachery of the plausible deceiver whose true character is revealed by the landlord of the inn in the course of a long and curious conversation with Adams.

It is late in the afternoon when they leave the inn, and, before they have trudged many miles, night comes on. In the darkness they are alarmed by the voices of sheep-stealers (whom they mistake for cut-throats). They, therefore, turn out of the high road and take to the fields, arriving eventually at the house of Farmer Wilson, by whom they are hospitably received. Adams and Joseph sit up all night by fire, while Wilson recounts the story of his life upto the time when he lost his eldest son—a pretty child, singularly marked with a strawberry on his left-breast, who had been stolen years before by gipsies.

The Tenth Day (Friday). In the morning Adams and his young friends take leave of Wilson (who promises to call on the parson the following week on his way to Somersetshire), and soon regain the high road from which they had diverged on the previous evening. After a tramp of many miles they arrive

about noon at (Compton Chamberlayne, beyond Salisbury) 'one of the beautifullest spots of ground in the universe' ; and, here, in a kind of natural amphitheatre' planted with rising woods, they pause for rest and refreshment. Two incidents follow :

(*a*) 'The hunting adventure', wherein Parson Adams is hunted by a pack of hounds.

(*b*) The 'scene of roasting', in which the parson is subjected to very uncivil and unseemly treatment in the house of the master of the pack.

After this disagreeable experience, Adams and his companions immediately leave the squire's house. Though the night is very dark, they walk rapidly for seven miles to a poor hostelry called 'The New Inn', where they sup and retire to bed.

The Eleventh Day (Saturday). A little before daybreak, three of the hunting Squire's satellites, with three servants, come to the inn, with the intention of abducting Fanny. After a fierce fight Adams and Joseph are overcome and tied to bedposts. and Fanny is carried off. Luckily, while the girl and her captors are still on the road, they are met by Mr. Peter Pounce who, escorted by two armed retainers, is speeding homewards in a chariot, only a few miles ahead of Lady Booby. Fanny is rescued and taken back to the inn, where Adams and Joseph are immediately released from their bonds. Adams' horse, which had been forgotten and left behind on the previous Tuesday, but had been recognised and redeemed by Pounce's servants, is now restored to him. After a little delay Pounce and the Parson drive off in the chariot, and Joseph follows on horse back, with Fanny on a pillion behind him. Shortly before they reach East Stour Adams is grossly insulted by Pounce and leaps out of the chariot. He then walks with Joseph and Fanny, who stop to bear him company the remaining mile into the village. As they enter the parish, Lady Booby just arrived from London in a coach and six, passes them on her way to the Hall. Adams takes Joseph and Fanny to his parsonage, and with 'a homely meal' provided for the travellers by Mr. Adams, the epic of the road terminates.

(*c*) **Part III**. This section contains a narrative of the events which follow the arrival at the village and lead upto Joseph's marriage with Fanny. The period covered is nine days ;

but on four of these days (the second, sixth, seventh, and eighth), nothing of much importance happens. The author assembles his principal characters in the village in preparation for the denouement which is brought about by the hackneyed epic device of 'discovery and revolution'.

The First Day (Sunday). Lady Booby, her passion inflamed by the sight of Joseph on the previous day, attends church, and hears Adams publish the banns of marriage between Joseph and Fanny. Determined to prevent the marriage, she sends for Adams soon after the conclusion of the service, and insolently orders him not to publish the banns again ; Adams, however, refuses to obey her. In the afternoon, therefore, she summons the pettifogger Toms Scout, and directs him to take measures for ridding the parish of Joseph and Fanny. Scout engages to arrange the matter with the help of Justice Frolick.

The Second Day. (Monday) is passed by Lady Booby in great agitation, but is otherwise uneventful.

The Third Day. (Tuesday) 'This day being a holiday, Lady Booby attends church, where she hears Joseph's banns published for the second time. Returning home in a violent rage, she is informed by Slipslop that lawyer Scout is prosecuting Joseph and Fanny before Justice Frolick, with a view to getting them both to Bridewell. While Lady Booby is in some perplexity at this news—for, though she is set on getting rid of Fanny, she by no means desires the removal of Joseph—her nephew, Mr. Booby, and his newly wedded wife, Pamela, on their way home from London, arrive at the Hall. Soon afterwards, Mr. Booby, having been privately informed by a servant of the dangerous situation of Joseph (his wife's brother) drives in haste to Justice Frolick's, and is just in time to save the two young lovers from being sent to Bridewell for a month. Matters being thus satisfactorily arranged, Joseph spends the rest of the day at the Hall, while Fanny is taken by Parson Adams to his Personage

The Fourth Day. (Wednesday). Joseph, having risen early, has a two hours' interview with Fanny at the Parsonage, and arranges with Adams to get married on the following Monday. Lady Booby who has now secretly made up her mind to marry Joseph, urges her nephew to dissuade the

young man from his intended match with Fanny, which she (points out) would be lowering to the family into which his sister Pamela has married. Mr. Booby agrees, and both he and Pamela press Joseph to give Fanny up. All this happens before breakfast.

After the meal, Joseph goes off to meet Fanny and the following events occur :

(*a*) Beau Didapper, on his way to visit Lady Booby, sees Fanny walking in an avenue, is struck by her beauty, and orders his servant to persuade her to come to him at the Hall that evening.

(*b*) The servant attacks Fanny on his own account, and is thrashed by Joseph, who suddenly appears upon the scene and rescued his betrothed.

(*c*) Joseph, disturbed by the opposition of his relations, and by the dangers besetting Fanny, begs Adams to consent to his immediate marriage by licence. The parson, a stickler for ecclesiastical etiquette insists that he must be married by banns, and consequently wait till after Sunday.

(*d*) Little Dick, Adams' youngest son, falls into the river, but is saved from drowning by the poor pedlar, who week before had assisted Adams with the loan of six-and-half six pence.

(*e*) Lady Booby, finding Beau Didapper infatuated with Fanny, and hoping that he will bribe her to desert Joseph and become his mistress, takes the Hall party to call at the parsonage. In the course of the visit Didapper is rude to Fanny, for which Joseph gives him a box on the ear. Mr. Booby and Pamela again protest that Fanny is not a proper match for Pamela's brother. The Hall party, then, return home for dinner ; and Joseph invites the Adams' family and the pedlar to dine with him and Fanny at 'The George Alehouse'.

We come now to the first of the 'discoveries', which are to change the situation and bring about a happy conclusion. The problem before the author is to remove the strong objection of Mr. Booby and Pamela to the marriage of Pamela's brother

with a farm-girl, and to get the lovers wedded and comfortably settled. He solves it by means of two successive discoveries—first of the parentage of Fanny, and then of that of Joseph.

The first discovery is made after the dinner at 'The George' The pedlar relates that Fanny in her infancy had been stolen from her cradle by a gipsy woman, with whom he had formerly been intimate ; that, when she was between three and four years old, he had himself sold her to Sir Thomas Booby for three guineas ; and that she was in truth the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Andrews and the sister of Pamela. This revelation solves the difficulty about Fanny's humble station ; but it throws the lovers into despair, since it seems to establish their relationship as brother and sister, and to make their marriage for ever impossible. Lady Booby's hopes revive. It is decided, however ; to suspend belief in the pedlar's story till the morrow, when Mr. and Mrs. Andrews themselves are coming to escort Mr. Booby and Pamela to their home. Adams, Joseph, and Fanny remain as the Hall for the night.

The Fifth Day (Thursday). Sometime after 3 a.m. occurred several curious night-adventures in which Didapper and Adams, Slipslop and Fanny were concerned. After breakfast Mr. and Mrs. Andrews arrive, and the second discovery ensues. The old lady admits the truth of the pedlar's tale, and acknowledges Fanny as her own long lost daughter. She then relates that, when her own child was kidnapped, a sickly boy-baby, with a strawberry mark on his breast, had been left in the cradle. This baby she had adopted and named Joseph, concealing the affair from her husband (who was serving as a Sergeant at Gibralter at that time), for fear lest he should take a dislike to a child not his own. The pedlar confirms the account of the exchange, of which he had been told by his gypsy companion ; adding that the substituted baby with the distinguishing mark had been stolen from the house of a gentleman of name unknown, who lived about forty miles from the place where the exchange was made. In the presence of the company, Joseph unbuttons his coat, and shows the strawberry mark on his left breast. Immediately after his disclosure, Mr. Wilson, passing through the village on his way into Somersetshire, calls at the Hall in search of Adams. He hears

the story, examines the mark on the breast, and has no hesitation in identifying Joseph as his own son, long ago kidnapped by the gipsies.

The effect of this two-fold discovery is to remove all impediments to the marriage of the lovers. While, Lady Booby, in an agony of rage and disappointment, shuts herself in her room, the rest of the party leave for Mr. Booby's house, twenty miles away, where they pass the remainder of this eventful day, 'with the utmost satisfaction'.

The Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Days (Friday-Sunday). On these days the only events are the arrival of Mrs. Wilson, Joseph's mother, at Mr. Booby's house, and the publishing of the banns of marriage for the third and last time.

The Ninth Day (Monday). The lovers are married by Parson Adams in Mr. Booby's parish church. On the third day after the wedding they go home with the Wilsons. Subsequently, Joseph lays out £ 2,000 generously bestowed on Fanny by Mr. Booby, on the purchase of a little farm in his father's parish, where he and his young wife happily settle.

Defects and Merits of the Novel

Joseph Andrews is a remarkable work. The story is told with delightful freshness and humour ; and also with admirable perspicuity, every detail which might puzzle the reader being carefully explained. The action moves forward with an irresistible swing. The pace, indeed, is skilfully varied. The fights go quickly ; the talks by the wayside are leisurely. But there are no hitches. Only once in the whole of the book—when Wilson relates at great length the history of his own life—does our interest flag. Some of the incidents and dialogues are unsurpassed in Fielding's writings. Not even in *Tom Jones* do we come across anything better than the account of the rescue of Joseph by the occupants of the stage coach ; or the narrative of the examination of Adams by the foxhunting justice, etc. With all its excellences, however, the book has faults—particularly faults of construction—which show that the author was still an amateur in the art of novel writing.

The chief weaknesses are obvious enough. First, the story may fairly be criticized as too rambling and haphazard.

Secondly, the main narrative is interrupted by the interpolation of two independent stories—'The History of Leonora' and 'the History of Two Friends'—and by the extensive life-history of Mr. Wilson. Thirdly, the denouement is not satisfactory. The discovery device, whereby a radical change of the whole situation is effected, is an artificial expedient, and we cannot but feel that the happy ending has been engineered. The tale of the stealing and exchange of two babies does not carry conviction, at any rate to the modern reader. Yet it is but fair to remember that in Fielding's time kidnapping of children by gipsies was by no means so uncommon an event as it is today. Fourthly, in the episodes of the book Fielding too frequently indulges in farcical absurdities.

(*ii*) *Amelia*

Amelia was the last novel of Fielding. It was published in 1751. On the day of its publication, there was a great rush to purchase the book and it is reported that the whole first impression was sold out on the day of its publication. Johnson, at any rate, told Mrs. Piozzi that *Amelia* was 'perhaps the only book, which being printed off betimes one morning a new edition'—he meant a second impression without alteration—'was called for before night'.

The story of *Amelia*

The main action of the story commences on 'the first of April of a certain year, and is carried on through the whole of that month and into May. The year intended, though not specified, is 1733. The scene is laid in the parish of St. Martin in the Fields, within the liberty of Westminster, with which Fielding was so familiar. The central personage is an amiable and beautiful woman, whose bitter trials during a few very critical weeks, and whose ultimate triumph over all of them, are related.

Seven years before the story opens Amelia, notwithstanding the opposition of her mother, had married a well-intentioned, but weak and stupid, young army officer, named 'Billy' Booth. Misfortunes had pursued the couple. Booth, after having been twice wounded at the siege of Gibraltar, became, by reason of the reduction of his regiment, a lieutenant on half

pay, his income being 'less than £ 40 a year'. Amelia when absent abroad with her husband, learnt that her mother had died, having her entire fortune, except her paltry legacy of £ 10, to her elder daughter, Betty. Being thus impoverished, they were assisted by a generous friend, the Reverend Dr. Harrison, who settled them in the country, and encouraged them to try farming on a modest scale. But, owing largely to Booth's folly, the experiment proved a failure; and, to avoid imprisonment for debt, Booth fled to London, leaving his wife and family to follow. At this point the action of the novel begins.

A few days after his arrival in town, Booth rashly interfered in a street fray; with the result that he was sent to jail by Justice Thrasher. Here he fell in with a ragged gambler named Robinson, who was destined to influence his fortunes in the sequel. Here also, to his great surprise, he discovered Miss Fanny Mathews—a 'remarkably handsome' young lady, with whom some nine years before, he had carried on a half serious flirtation at Salisbury, and on whose heart he had then made a lasting impression. This Miss Matthews was a woman of intensely violent passions, who had been committed to prison for having stabbed a treacherous lover with a penknife. She was well enough off to engage a private room, and was further supplied money by a man of wealth and position, who aspired to gain her favour. She was able, therefore, to entertain Booth in her apartment; and, by use of all her alluring acts, she induced him to live with her for a week. At the end of that time, just at the moment when, having herself been released, and having purchased Booth's discharge she was about to carry him off with her from the prison, Amelia suddenly appeared. Miss Matthews, consequently departed alone, and Booth left with his wronged, but unsuspecting, wife.

The couple, with their two children Billy and Emily—the third child a baby having been left in the country—occupied rooms up two pairs of stairs, in the house of a Mrs. Ellison in Spring Gardens. The lodging was in the verge of the court; so that Booth was fairly safe from arrest for debt, so long as he kept within the prescribed bounds. He, was, however, in great straits for lack of money; also, he was sorely troubled, both by remorse for his misbehaviour with Miss Matthews (who showed an embarrassing eagerness to resume relations

with him), and by fear lest his prison-intrigue should come to the knowledge of his wife. In these circumstances, he made the mistake of confiding in an old friend, Colonel James, who unknown to him, was the very person who had given money to Miss Matthews, and was intent on making her his mistress. Though the friendship between the two men, which was temporarily interrupted by this indirect communication, was patched up, the colonel afterwards felt no scruple about injuring Booth, when it became his interest so to do. Meanwhile Amelia was subjected to the undesirable pursuit of a rich and dissolute peer, who made a hobby of seducing young married women. The Booth's landlady, Mrs. Ellison, was secretly in this scoundrel's employ. Struck by Amelia's beauty, the woman took pains to make friends with her, and in due course persuaded her to attend an oratorio, where by previous arrangement, she was viewed by the peer, who concealed himself under a disguise. He found her to his taste. Three days later, he called in his proper person at Spring Gardens, and was introduced to Booth, whom he graciously promised to recommend for a commission—in the West Indies, where his wife could not accompany him. This business afforded him a pretext for further visits. Amelia, completely unsuspicious of his true character, deeply grateful for his apparent interest in her husband, and not unappreciative of his respectful attentions to himself, received him in her own apartment, played ombre with him in Mrs. Ellison's, accepted the costly presents which he bestowed on her children, and was very nearly trapped into accompanying her landlady to a masquerade at Ranelagh, after which, according to plan, her ruin was to have been accomplished. From this disaster, however, she was saved by the intervention of an acquaintance, a certain Mrs. Bennet, who had herself been one of the noble lord's numerous victims, and, who, in pity revealed Amelia the real nature of the man and the methods whereby he was wont to effect his wicked ends.

Hardly had Amelia escaped from one danger than she was threatened by another. Colonel James, an accomplished man of the world, and 'a perfect libertine with regard to women', after his reconciliation with Booth had gone with him to his house, had there been completely captivated by Amelia's

vivacity and beauty. With such a man admiration for a woman meant only one thing ; and for success in this he was encouraged to hope by an accident which befell Booth at this time—his arrest for debt and consignment to a sponging house. The treacherous friend at once hastened to comfort Amelia, and to offer his services to Booth ; but his secret plan was to prolong the poor man's confinement until he could devise some means of separating him more permanently from his wife, in which case he fancied sure of accomplishing what he desired. This scheme, however, was frustrated by the opportune arrival of that benefactor of the family, the estimable Dr. Harrison, who procured Booth's immediate release from detention. Meanwhile, Amelia's eyes had been opened by Mrs. Bennet or rather Mrs. Atkinson—for she had privately married a worthy sergeant of that name, who was a humble adorer of Amelia—to the bareness which underlay the apparent goodness of Colonel James. But she was in a difficult position ; for she dared not reveal the truth to her hot-headed husband, and was, therefore obliged to treat the colonel with a show of cordiality, which could hardly fail to give him encouragement.

Colonel James now devised a new plot. He offered to lend Booth money to pay off all his debts, to procure him a commission in a regiment in the West Indies and, during his absence abroad, to take care of Amelia and the children in his own house. The deluded youngman was full of gratitude for such kindness. Amelia, however, realizing the true nature of this offer, refused steadfastly to consent to a separation from her husband. But she was unable to avoid accepting the Colonel's invitation to accompany his party to a Haymarket masquerade. She did not, in the end, attend this function, but sent Mrs. Atkinson, who closely resembled her in voice and figure, and was of course disguised with a masque and a domino, in her place. Unhappily, the rule led to further complications ; for Mrs. Atkinson, meeting the wicked peer at the masquerade, determined, with strange lack of delicacy, to turn the occasion to advantage. Personating Amelia, she artfully encouraged him to expect an early conquest, on condition that she should first obtain a commission for Sergeant Atkinson. The result of this trick was very serious for Amelia, since the peer was stimulated to renew her efforts to gain possession of her.

The noble lord has realised that his original scheme of sending Booth to the West Indies was impracticable. He now thought of a better plan for putting him out of the way-by locking him up in prison. One of his creatures was a black guardly officer, named Captain Trent, who had formerly been an ensign in Booth's regiment at Gibraltar. This satellite was ordered to inveigle Booth into some trouble, which would deprive him of the power of protecting Amelia. Trent accordingly cultivated the society of his brother-officer with great assiduity ; and, at last, one evening, induced him, when heated with wine, to play cards with himself and two confederate sharpers. Before, they separated, Booth not only was fleeced of two guineas which he had in his pocket, but also incurred a gambling debt amounting to £ 50. Then Trent being convinced that his dupe could not raise that sum, demanded payment of the debt, and took measures for getting him arrested and imprisoned if the demands were not complied with.

In this crisis Amelia showed herself a true heroine. Without uttering a word of reproach or complaint, she pawned most of her old clothing, and all the little trinkets belonging to herself and the children, and just managed to scrape together the sum required. Booth took the money, but being unluckily unable to find Trent and settle his account with him, he actually allowed himself to be persuaded by a foolish acquaintance to present the whole £50 to a 'little great man' at the War Office, in the vain hope that, in return for this bribe, he would be accorded a commission. Thus Amelia's sacrifices were thrown away. She and the children were in destitution, and the debt to Trent was still unpaid.

The day on which Booth committed this last act of criminal stupidity marked the climax of Amelia's sufferings. She had already pawned most of her wardrobe. She now discovered that the little maid in the house, Betty, had run away with all the rest, leaving her literally nothing except the clothes that were on her back. She had not a shilling in the world. Some temporary relief, however, was afforded her by the unexpected restoration of a miniature of herself set in gold with three small diamonds, which Atkinson who had always worshipped her in secret, had stolen years before, for the sake of the pictured face. This she pawned for nine guineas, and with some of the money

purchased some tarts for the children, and a little supper for her husband and herself. While she was preparing the supper, which she was determined to make a festive one, Booth came in—but only to tell her, to her bitter disappointment, that he was engaged to sup abroad on business of importance. He promised, however, to return as soon as possible. What he did not tell her was that on his way home he had unluckily met Miss Matthews, who had sworn that she would acquaint his wife with what had happened in prison if he did not give her his word of honour that he would visit her that evening in her lodging in Dean Street. It is only fair to add that Booth went to the appointment with the firm intention of terminating—if possible, amicably, but in any case finally—this discreditable connection.

Amelia supped with her children. Booth did not return. Soon after 4 o'clock a letter addressed to her husband was delivered at the house, which, thinking it might be important she opened and read. It was from Colonel James, who, having been informed by a spy of Booth's visit to Miss Matthews, challenged him to a duel with pistols in Hyde Park at 6 o'clock next morning. When she grasped the contents of this note, poor Amelia at last broke down. Her husband whose many follies she had so generously excused, now seemed to be evidently faithless and worthless. Before she had discovered from this shock, a letter arrived from Booth himself, telling her that he had been arrested for the debt to Trent, and was again in custody at the sponging house. The bailiff had caught him as he was leaving Miss Matthews's lodgings.

After this night of anguish, Amelia's fortunes mended. First she received from her contrite husband a full confession of his misconduct with Miss Matthews, of which, however—though Booth did not know it—she was already apprised, and which she had already forgiven. Secondly, thanks to the good offices of Dr. Harrison, Colonel James consented to drop the challenge, of which Booth had not been informed. The Colonel, also, seeing no hope of succeeding in his designs on Amelia, prudently decided to devote himself to the conquest of Miss Matthews, whom he eventually made his mistress. Thirdly, Booth himself during his detention in the bailiff's house had read a volume of Barrow's sermons, which had converted him from scepticism,

and had so impressed him that he declared that he would be 'the better man for them' as long as he lived. Finally, by the confession of the fellow Robinson—the same that Booth had once met in the jail—who had been wounded in the scuffle and believed himself to be dying, it was revealed that the reputed will of Amelia's mother was a forgery, executed by a rascally attorney named Murphy, at the instigation of Amelia's sister Betty. By her genuine will, Mrs. Harris had left her whole estate, except £1000 to Amelia. This information, the truth of which was in due course established, produced a complete revolution in the circumstances of the heroine. Raised providentially from penury into affluence, she and her husband soon quitted London, where they have suffered so much, and established themselves happily in the pleasant country house near Salisbury where Amelia had passed her girlhood. Here in contentment and prosperity, and with a family of six children growing up about them, Fielding leaves them.

Merits and Defects of the Novel

Arthur Murphy, criticising Fielding's novels, observed that '*Amelia* holds the same proportion to *Tom Jones* that the *Odyssey* of Homer bears, in the estimation of Longinus, to the *Illiad*......It is the *Odyssey*, the moral and pathetic work of Henry Fielding'. He found a great deal to admire in the book—particularly its 'affecting and tender passages', and the 'fine vein of morality' which 'runs through the whole'—yet considered that it showed a definite decline of power. It 'has indeed the marks of genius, but of genius beginning to fall into its decay'. Comparing the three great novels, *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones*, and *Amelia*, he declared that the first represents the sunrise, the second the full and perfect moontide glory, and the third the lingering sunset of Fielding's brilliant day.

Now it is certainly true that, in many respects, *Amelia* differs markedly from Fielding's earlier novels. It scarcely answers to the formula of comic epic poem in prose'. The element of comedy—'the laughter for laughter's sake'—has almost entirely disappeared. We look in vain in this book for the sparkling vivacity, the buoyant humour, the swinging movement through changing scenes and strange adventures, which

delight us in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. The action is less brisk ; the scenes are less varied and less vividly coloured ; the characters are for the most part less singular ; the scintillations of wit are rarer. In the place of the old exuberant gaiety we find mordant satire on the 'glaring evils' of contemporary society, and pathetic descriptions, calculated to arouse 'a tender sensations' in the breast of good natured reader'.

Not-with-standing its happy ending, *Amelia* is certainly a sombre book. From the beginning until near the close it affords an example of austere and pitiless realism. Here are depicted various scenes of eighteenth century London—the police court, the jail, the Opera House, with its masquerade the mansions of the rich with their dinners and routs, the gardens' at Vaux hall, the Mall and Hyde Park. In all these places vice is rampant, though in some of them it is concealed under a clock of respectability. Fielding shows us the foul reality that underlies the glittering show. He exposes relentlessly the cynical corruption of the Government, the maladministra-tion of the law, the horrors of jails and sponging houses, the miserable shifts to which the impecunious were reduced, the profanity and licentiousness in places of public amusement, the rottenness of seemingly decent society, with its duels, its gaming, its shameless intrigues and reductions. It is not a pleasant picture. Such stern harsh realism is not found in *Joseph Andrews or Tom Jones*.

The book, indeed, gives an impression that the writer has aged. It is true that he is still but forty-four, but illness, overwork, disappointment and bereavement, and, perhaps, not least, the depressing familiarity, with crime and misery which he has acquainted at Bow street, have chastened his spirit and lowered his vitality. He is touched already with that melancholy which often attends advancing years. No longer the joyous observer of the comedy of existence, he now concentrates his attention on life's darker aspects and is profoundly depressed by the sins, the abdurate follies, and the tragic sufferings of mankind.

Yet Murphy was surely mistaken in his view that *Amelia* exhibits traces of intellectual deterioration. Fielding's observation is as keen, his judgment as sound, his power of realistic

description as vigorous as ever. His irony, if less persistently kept up, has not degenerated in quality. The plot of the story though Scott was inclined to rank it even with the inimitable plot of *Tom Jones*, is in fact less perfectly constructed; yet the author has not lost the art of springing surprises on the reader—who would imagine, for instance, that Dr. Harrison was 'the madman' who ransacked Booth's lodging, or that it was Mrs. Atkinson, and not Amelia, who attended the masquerade?—nor does he prove himself less skilful in illustrating the truth that apparently insignificant accidents often produce momentous results. The character-drawing, again, is not less true to nature; indeed the delineation of female character is more subtle than in the preceding novels. The book, moreover, abounds in admirable little pictures of contemporary life and manners.

A distinguishing feature of this work is its pathos. We are told the story of a young married woman, beautiful in person and elevated in character, who—by reason of poverty, persecution, and the weakness of an unstable husband—is made to endure almost intolerable sufferings. The narrative of her trials is often intensely pathetic. Indeed, there are very few more affecting passages in fiction than the account of Amelia in despondency at home, afraid to spend even six pence on half a pint of wine, while Booth in the tavern is incurring a gambling debt of £50; or the description of the dreadful evening when, after preparing the little supper to give her husband pleasure, she discovers that he has left her alone in order to visit Miss Matthews. This element of pathos is something new in Fielding's work; as Scott pointed out, there is little if anything, like it in *Joseph Andrews* or *Tom Jones*. For the first time in this book, the novelist reveals himself as a master of tender and touching description. His pathetic writing is indeed of the finest quality. It is beautifully restrained. There is not the least attempt to work on the reader's feelings by the multiplication of harrowing details, or the use of moving language. Sentimentalism is strictly avoided. Simply, briefly, and austerely, without elaboration or embellishment, Fielding exhibits the pathos inherent in affecting situations and leaves it to make its own impression. And this presentation of the pathetic, so poignant yet so reserved, is sufficient apart from everything else, to make

Amelia notable among Fielding's literary performances. Without this novel we should never have known how our author excelled, not only in rich inventiveness, sparkling wit, and racy humour, but also in sympathetic insight into the tragedy of human life, and in the capacity, for exciting in others the purifying emotions of charity and compassion.

[*Adapted*]

APPENDIX III

SOLUTIONS OF SOME QUESTIONS SET IN UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS

Q. 1. Attempt a brief critical appreciation of the plot of *Tom Jones*.

Ans. See Page 65—71.

Q. 2. Show how *Tom Jones* bristles with theories.

Fielding intended that his novel should furnish not merely entertainment, but also instruction. Therefore, he deliberately used it as a vehicle for the expression of his artistic and moral ideals. These explanations he put forward, partly in 'initial essays, prefixed to the several books, and partly in shorter comments interjected, when suitable opportunities occurred into the narrative.

"The regular insertion", says Dudden, "of an essay at the commencement of each division of the work is a peculiarity of *Tom Jones*. Elsewhere the interpolations of a 'prolegomenous' chapter occurs only occasionally. It is true that in *Joseph Andrews*, a much shorter work, we do find as many as three examples, in addition to the important Preface ; but in *Jonathan Wild* there is only one, and in *Amelia* likewise there is only one.

"Fielding himself singled out these disquisitions as the parts of his 'prodogious work' which had given the author the greatest pains in composing' ; he even declared, 'I can with less pains write one of the books of this history, than the prefatory chapter to each of them. Nevertheless he considered that they were necessary ; partly to secure observance of the artistic principle of contrast, the 'serious essays' being designed to serve as 'foils' to the lighter and more amusing narrative

portions of the work ; and partly to distinguish genuine examples of good fiction from 'foolish novels and monstrous romances', turned out by scribblers 'who are utterly incapable of any degree of reflection, and whose learning is not equal to an essay'.

'The prefatory chapters have, for the most part, no organic connexion with the chapters which follow. Fielding compared them with prologues to plays. Just as prologues were, as a rule, so slightly connected with the dramas which they prefaced that the prologue to any one play could just as well serve for any other ; so, said he, most of the initial chapters might 'as properly be prefixed to any other book in this history as to that which they introduce, or indeed to any other history as to this.' The majority of them are, in fact independent dissertations, which can be taken out of their places and rearranged in any order,—or even without any injury to the story, though not without loss of pleasure and profit to the reader—omitted altogether. Pierre—Antoine de la Place, in his French abridgement of *Tom Jones*, did actually cut them out, with two exceptions. It seems probable that Fielding deferred the composition of the greater number until almost the last, when the main narrative was already practically completed."

In these essays Fielding, first distinguishes his novel from others of that kind which are not genuine novels but romances. He names his novel as a 'history'. 'For just as the historian draws his materials from authoritative records, so the writer of a new fiction draws his materials from an authoritative source, namely, the 'vast authentic dooms-day book of nature'. The materials, then are supplied ; but they still need to be artfully dressed-up for the reader. And for a proper and judicious dealing with them he lays down two principles : the Principle of Selection and the Principle of Lovely and Varied Presentation.

To write this kind of novel, says Fielding, a writer must possess four requisites : Genius, Learning, Conversation or personal experience of men and women. and Sympathy, Sensibility, the Feeling Heart. Likewise there are, many other theories which have been propounded in these initial essays.

Besides questions related with the art of the novel, he dealt with, (in these initial essays,) such topics also as Love, his view of the world and of the Aristocratic society.

It is not only in these initial essays that he put his theories, but in the body of the novel he refused to efface himself. "Throughout the entire drama", says Dudden, "which he presents we are perpetually conscious of his presence in the background and every now and then, when the humour takes him, he stops the action altogether, steps forward to the front, and agreeably discants on the characters, on the incidents, on the moral lessons to be drawn, on particular details, and on things in general. He compared himself, indeed, with the chorus of the old Greek Comedy whose function was to voice the poet's comment on the transactions exhibited on the stage. Nor was he doubtful about the propriety of such *parabases*. These incidental comments—which vary in length from two or three lines to two or three paragraphs—are of three kinds. Some merely indicate the procedure which the author has determined to adopt in the conduct of the story. Others are designed to elucidate what is obscure, to account for what is surprising, and to call attention to what is specially noteworthy in the narrative. The rest touch lightly on all sorts and kinds of matters suggested by and more or less relevant to, the history narrated,"

Important though they are, yet there are critics who object to the insertion of these initial essays and incidental comments. They think that these long digressive essays and comments detract the attention of the reader from the main action and so are detrimental to the interest of the narrative'. But they have a prejudiced and wrong opinion. "The observations of a great novelist', says Dudden, "On the subject of his art are naturally of special interest and the student of literature may possibly regard the essays on this topic as the most valuable and important. Fielding claimed to be "the founder of a new province of writing', which he named 'prosai comi-epic-writing', or 'the heroic historical, prosaic poem', In *Joseph Andrews*, he had described the general character of this new species ; but he deemed it desirable in *Tom Jones* to offer some additional comments and explanations."

Sir Walter Scott also defended these essays on this very ground. "Fielding", wrote Scott in *Lives of the Novelists*, "considered his works as experiments in British literature, and hence he chose to prefix a preliminary chapter to each book, explanatory of his own views and of the rules attached to this mode of composition. Those critical introductions, which rather interrupt the course of the story and the flow of the interest at the first perusal, are found on a second or third, the most entertaining chapters of the whole work".

Thus Scott and Dudden defend these initial essays and incidental comments. The view of George Eliot sounds more sane and reasonable. She, for her part, evinced high appreciation of Fielding's 'copious remarks and digressions' and specially of 'those initial chapters to the successive books of his history where he seems to bring his armchair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English.' 'But', she went on, 'Fielding lived when the days were longer (for time, like money, is measured by our needs), when summer afternoons were spacious, and the clock ticked slowly in the winter evenings. We belated historians must not linger after his example; and if we did so, it is probable that our chat would be thin and eager, as if delivered from a camp-stool in parrot-house".

Q. 3. **Examine the charge of immorality against *Tom Jones*.**

Ans. It is surprising to see that from the time of its publication down to comparatively recent date, *Tom Jones* has been criticized chiefly on the ground of its alleged immoral tendency. Richardson for example, maliciously denounced it as 'a dissolute book... ...profligate performance'. There is the case of Dr. Johnson who angrily rebuked Hannah More for alluding to a passage in the novel. 'I am shocked', said he, 'to hear you quote from so vicious a book. I am sorry to hear you have read it; a confession which no modest lady would ever make. I scarcely knew a more corrupt work'. Sir John Hawkins, Johnson's biographer and editor too, savagely attacked the book, as 'seemingly intended to sap the foundations of that morality which it is the duty of parents, and all public instructors to inculcate in the minds of young people. He affirmed that the

author, by his vulgarisation of the ethics of Shaftesbury, and specially by his invention of the cant phrase 'goodness of heart', had done more towards corrupting the rising generation than any writer we know of'. Even Carlyle, though he allowed that Fielding's novels were 'genuine things' hesitated to recommend them, because their morality is so loose.

But many critics have defended the novel. Sir Walter, is one of them. Scott, indeed, was 'no great believer in the moral utility to be derived from fictitious compositions.' His opinion was that novels were read for amusement rather than for instruction, and that the common talk about their influence for good or bad, in the main, was disingenuous and nonsensical. But, however, he was convinced that *Tom Jones*—inspite of 'certain jocularly coarse passages' contained in it—would do no one any harm.

'The vices and follies of Tom Jones (he wrote) are those which the world soon teaches to all who enter on the career of life, and to which society is unhappily but too indulgent; nor do we believe that, in any one instance, the perusal of Fielding's novel has added one libertine to the large list, who would not have been such had it never crossed the press. And it is with concern we add our sincere belief that the fine picture of frankness and generosity exhibited in that fictitious character has had as few imitators as the career of his follies'. (*Lives of the Novelists*)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was another defender of the novel, who insisted strongly on the essential healthiness of Fielding's work, in contrast with the essential unhealthiness of Richardson's.

'I do loathe (he said) the cant phrase which can recommend *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe* as strictly moral, though they poison the imagination of the young with continued doses of *tinct, lyttae*, while *Tom Jones* is prohibited as loose. I do not speak of young women; but a young man whose heart or feelings can be injured, or even his passions excited, by aught in this novel, is already thoroughly corrupt.'

Lyttons, again, in a paper 'Of English Notions of Morality', proclaimed Fielding 'a deep, accurate and scientific moralist.' and deplored the general lack of perception of the ethical motive which inspired him in the composition of the greatest

novel. 'Nothing,' he declared, 'can more clearly prove our ignorance of real morals, than the fact that no one appreciated this high moral purpose in our author'. But, notwithstanding the few dissentient voices, the immorality of *Tom Jones* was, until almost our own time, one of the generally accepted common places of literary criticism.

But to one, who had read *Tom Jones* aright this allegation must seem surprising. Fielding was a realist and his aim was to paint life as it is, in its darker as well as in its brighter aspects. He did not hesitated to paint that which might look obscene to others, but which in his opinion might not be so. Thus Tom's sexual relations with Molly Segrim, Lady Bellaston and Mrs Waters, which critics think could easily have been avoided by Fielding, were in fact not so bad as these critics think. Fielding believed in the goodness of heart. One who is 'good in heart' may sometimes be led to do things which he himself may not like to do,, had he not faced certain peculiar situations or circumstances. And hence, in the opinion of Fielding Tom remains good of heart even after he had done all these undesirable things.

Therefore, there can be no question that he was not a moralist, "He confessedly wrote", says Dudden, "not merely to picture, but also to modify; not merely to describe the life of his time, but also to criticize it with a view to its correction. In the Dedication of *Tom Jones* he affirmed that his intention in that composition was threefold: first, to exhibit the loveliness of virtue and the avoidance of vice; and thirdly, to inculcate the lesson that virtue needs to be guarded by discretion. He insisted that the reader would discover in his pages 'nothing prejudicial to the cause of religion and virtue'. On the contrary,' he said, 'I declare, that to recommend goodness, and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history'. Nothing could be clearer than this. Fielding undoubtedly intended his story to be the vehicle or medium of wholesome moral instruction with Richardsonian solemnity. 'Surely,' he cried, 'a man may speak truth with a smiling countenance'. He preferred to put forth his serious teachings lightly, using all his resources of wit and humour, 'to laugh mankind of their favourite follies and vices'. Unfortunately his lightness of touch was too often mistaken for flippancy, and

the earnest moral purpose underlying his work was consequently seldom appreciated."

Thus *Tom Jones* is not only not immoral, but also, on the other hand, a novel in which the author tried to formulate principles of morality. "Fielding was not strictly a moral philosopher. His aim was not to elaborate a system for the learned, but to formulate principles for the vulgar. He was concerned, not with abstract speculation, but with practical instruction. Like Addison, and Steele and Pope, he was not an original thinker, but a popularizer--a competent amateur in moral philosophy, presenting the conclusions of the experts in simple untechnical forms, adapted to the understanding of in-experts readers. ......The chief ethical ideas, which Fielding endeavoured to impose upon the readers of *Tom Jones* are the following : The beauty of virtue ; the profitableness of virtue ; the supreme value of 'goodness of heart' ; the necessity of prudence in the conduct of life ; and the existence of good as well as of evil elements in human nature, which in consequence ought not to be judged too harsy."

Q. 4. Consider the value of Fielding's contribution to the English novel.

Ans. See within p. 47.

Q. 5. Write a critical appreciation of Fielding's humour and irony.

Ans. See within pp. 33—122.

Q. 6. Consider carefully the pronouncements of Fielding in *Tom Jones* and elsewhere on the art of novel.

Ans. See within pp. 41—97.

Q. 7. What do you think of the claim that Fielding is the real founder of the English novel ?

Ans. See within pp. 47—48.

Q. 8. Write appreciative notes on two of the following :
Tom Jones, Allworthy, Miss Western, Lady Bellaston.

Ans. See within pp. 81—96.

Q. 9. Examine the charge of immorality made against *Tom Jones* and state definitely whether it can or cannot be sustained.

Ans. See Q. No. 3 above pp. 147—157.

Q. 10. Discuss Fielding as an artist in realistic fiction.

Ans. See within p. 18.

Q. 11. Assess Fielding's place in the history of the English novel.

Ans. See within p. ¬7.

Q. 12. Write an appreciation of *Tom Jones* as a 'comic epic in prose'.

Fielding had described *Joseph Andrews* in his preface as an example of something new in fiction, the comic epic in prose. "But *Joseph Andrews* was too light a piece, too purely tentative too much the result of a happy accident improved upon by genius, to bear the full weight of such an appelation. Presumably he called it an epic merely as the prose correlative to a narrative poem, thinking of the structure rather than the content. But the word may be applied to *Tom Jones*, with admirable propriety. It is a word, as Fielding remarks, implying some amplitude of scale, an action "extended and comprehensive", a great variety of characters. Fiction that is of epical scope will afford a panoramic view of a given epoch ; it will endeavour to bring out the general tendencies of that epoch by means of a scheme or plot showing events working out naturally to a decisive issue, and a group of representative characters, implicated together, and standing out clearly from the random concourse of humanity in the background. That which is comic or absurd will be presented ironically ; in other words, the author will stand calmly aloof, never taking sides, smiling at the vagaries and affectations of all alike. By the delicate balancing of opposites he will bring about that equilibrium which is the end of disinterested comedy.

Both *Joseph Andrews* and *Jonathan Wild* had been provided with a plot that artificially reduced to an intelligible order fortuitous incidents of life ; but the one, which began in burles-

que was light comedy, tending to farce; the other having a satirical motive, was not disinterested comedy at all. In spirit *Tom Jones* is a close analogue to the grave philosophic comedy of Moliere. It is, however, to a large extent epical in structur, or rather an alternation of epical and dramatic, the narrative complicating itself so as to bring various conflicting interests and rival intrigues to a close encounter, and then, by means of a sudden disclosure, unravelling the complication. In common with epic and with higher comedy, it is distinguished by the rigorous linkage of cause and effect, the agency of causation residing in the characters, in whom the play of motive is clearly exposed." (Baker).

Q. 13. Write a note on Fielding's humour.

Ans. See within pp. 33—122.

Q 14. Fielding as the father of the English Novel.

Ans. See within pp. 47.

Q. 15. Examine *Tom Jones* as a 'comic epic in prose.'

Ans. See Q. No. 12 above.

Q. 16. Fielding has that broad tolerant nature, that faculty of observation, that curiosity of life for itself which usually go to make the creators of characters". Amplify and illustrate.

Ans. See within pp. 20—76.

FORTHCOMING PUBI

Essays on Man

Merchant of Venice

The Winter Tale

Guide to Pride & Pr

Guide to A Passage t

Essays of Elia

Nun-Priest Tale

Paradise Lost Book